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神装機竜

最弱無敗の



Novel Illustrations

著者

明月千里（あかつき せんり）

茨城県在住。
この三巻を書いている最中、十年ぶりくらいにインフルエンザにかかったのですが、治療薬の投与が不思議な粉を吸うだけで終わってびっくりしました。
世の中進歩してますね！
ところでまだフラフラなんですけど、目の前の原稿をなんとかする粉は（ry
イラスト

春日 歩（かすが あゆむ）

イラストレーターときどき漫画描き。
勝手に3巻表紙はフィルフィカと思っていたらセリス先輩でした。
割り込みとはさすが先輩。
GA文庫さんから画集が発売中ですのでそちらもよろしくお願いします。



GA
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最弱無敗の神装機電3

明月千里

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最弱無敗の神装機電3
「男性はわたしに勝てない」
ついに学園最強の二年・セリス・ティア・アル・ブルース生部がの編纂する、男勝りな若きセリスの伝説により、ルクスが学園にいることが再び困難化する中、ルクスは終極試験の討伐のため、彼への助力を申し出る。対立する二人の正義は、彼らを支える生徒たちをも巻き込み、校内選抜戦による勝負にかけられる!!
一方、ある事情で退学したルクスは、セリスとデートをするために!?隠された少女の声と、暗躍する影、隠れないものをかけて、ルクスは「もう一つの最強」に挑む!
王道と闇が交錯する。最強の学園・シンジケート3巻!

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バハムート
最弱無敗の神装機竜3

明月千里



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Character



ルクス・アーカディア

滅亡したアーカディア帝国の王子。
『無敗の最弱』と呼ばれる機竜使い。



リーズシャルテ・アティスマータ

アティスマータ新王国の王女。朱^{あか}の戦姫^{せんき}と呼ばれる。
神装機竜《ティアマト》の使い手。



フィルフィ・アイングラム

アイングラム財閥の次女。ルクスの幼馴染みで学園長の妹。
神装機竜《デュポーン》の使い手。



クルルシファー・エインフォルク

北の大国、ユミル教国からの留学生であるクラスメイト。
神装機竜《ファフニール》の使い手。



アイリ・アーカディア

旧帝国の皇族の生き残り。
一年生で、ルクスの実の妹。

セリスティア・ラルグリス

^{シヴァレス}
『騎士団』の騎士団長の三年生。学園最強と言われている。
四大貴族の公爵家令嬢で、男嫌いとして有名。

三和音《トライアド》

学園で有名な三人組。リーダーで三年のシャリス、二年のティルファー、アイリのルームメイトの一年生、ノクトの三人。

レリィ・アイングラム

^{アカデミー}
王立士官学園の学園長。フィルフィの姉。

World

装甲機竜《ドラグライド》

遺跡から発掘された、古代兵器。

その中でも希少種であり、高い性能を持つものは、神装機竜と呼ばれる。

また、装甲機竜の使い手は、機竜使い《ドラグナイト》と呼ばれる。

遺跡《ルイン》

世界に七つ発見された古代遺跡。装甲機竜《ドラグライド》が発掘されたため、国力を左右する重要な存在として、各国間で縄張り争いが起きている。

幻神獣《アビス》

遺跡から現れる謎の幻獣。人類の脅威であり、機竜使いのみが対抗できる。

終焉神獣《ラグナレク》

ひとつの遺跡^{ルイン}に対し一匹のみ存在するという、超常の力を秘めた七匹の幻神獣。

黒き英雄

正体不明の装甲機竜《ドラグライド》を使い、たった1機で帝国の装甲機竜の約1200機を倒したと言われる伝説の英雄。

アティスマータ新王国

リーズシャルテの父であるアティスマータ伯が、アーカディア帝国に対して行ったクーデターによって、五年前に建国された国。

アーカディア旧帝国

世界の五分之一を束ねていた大国。世界最強と謳^{うた}われた、圧倒的な軍事力を背景に圧政を敷いていたが、クーデターによって滅ぼされた。

ルクスとアイリは、この帝国の皇族の生き残り。

ヘイブルグ共和国

近隣の強国。旧帝国が原因の終焉神獣^{ラグナレク}の討伐をアティスマータに要求している。











Prologue – On The Far-Off Sky

Two people were looking down at the world.

In a wide, inorganic and spherical airspace that was enveloped by very thin light.

The wall surfaces had countless frames and over there, the vast earth with many towns and forests were being projected like small windows.

The pair of a man and a woman were sitting in the observatory room of the machine that supplied all those sceneries.

One of them was a handsome faced and silver haired young man.

The man who was wearing an elegant mantle decorated with golden embroideries, with the majestic appearance of royalty, was clad in a bloodlust similar to a drawn blade.

“Is it okay, if I just ask one question?”

“—‘No way’. If I say that then what will you do? Is making an idiotic introduction an occupational disease? Mishis V Exfer”

The young man turned around with a smile that was similar to mocking or ridiculing towards her.

The young female who was wearing pure white and dark blue maid clothing was standing still just like a shadow.

She was a steel maid that would absolutely not reveal any openings even as she clearly displayed the will of devoting herself to the role of serving and attending to her master.

That beautiful face was emotionless and was just silently staring at the young man.

“Why did you entrust the Divine Drag-Ride to them? Although it’s for the sake

of that goal, but if you were to think of the distant future, isn't it a poor judgment to allow those guys who will eventually become hostile to you to possess fighting power?"

The female called Mishis quietly inquired with an indifferent tone.

After laughing scornfully in response to that question, the boy silently raised his chin and struck her with his gaze.

"The existences known as a <Hero>, where do you think they come from? Mishis"

"..... I find it hard to understand the meaning of your words."

After slightly hesitating, the maid replied as such and the young man laughed.

"Do you not have memories of reading heroic tales? Even the kind from fairytales is fine. The hero who aids the virtuous people and the princess, and defeats the evil monsters and leaders. Where would they be born from in this present world that is not a tale?"

"...They are arranged by the powers that be. —I guess? An existence burdened with the role known as <Hero>, claiming to be justice and fighting against the enemy."

Towards Mishis's words, the young man silently narrowed his eyes and raised the corner of his mouth.

"That's incorrect, Mishis. The thing called <Hero> is surely the populace."

"The... populace?"

Without showing any facial expression or gestures, Mishis just returned the question.

"That's right, Mishis. You who were asleep wouldn't know, but the majority of this world is like that. There is no such hero who would intentionally start fighting for the sake of a great cause. Both humans and animals, unless they were facing danger in a fight, would live by chasing after the small coins dangling in front of their eyes. Even knights, if they were to be cut off the reward from their feudal lord, they would be reduced to bandits in order to stave off subsistence. That is what's called the instinct of a person — of a living

being.”

“Then.....”

“Then, what is it that compels those guys to fight? A great cause? A sense of justice? A sense of duty? ...That’s not it, with that kind of self sacrificing mindset, the masses will never move.”

“.....”

Only the faint sound of Mishis catching her breath could be heard.

“What moves those guys is always <self-preservation>. In that case, for them who don’t have anything, you should just put them under ‘magic’. Bestowing upon them the powerful weapon known as Drag-Ride, informing them of the location of the ruins that are housing treasures, showing them the enemy called the Abyss, and then finally even allowing them to acquire the taste of victory, step by step — those guys will begin moving in order to protect their own interests and naturally the so called <Hero> would be reduced to a fool”

Cutting his words once there, the silver haired young man stood up.

While gazing at the window of the machine that projected countless sceneries, his mouth suddenly formed a smile.

“For us to open all of the ruins, <Heroes> are necessary. That reason alone is more than enough for giving the Divine Drag-Ride to them. From here on out the conflict between nations will intensify even further. Even a head maid like you would eventually be made to act, you know?”

“I understand the story. But in that case, from your logic doesn’t that mean that there are no such things as a <Hero> in this world from the beginning?”

Towards Mishis’s question, the presence of the young man who had been revealing a forced smile up until now changed.

As those pair of ashen eyes that bordered on insanity widened, he muttered.

“—Nope, that’s wrong”

Just for an instant, while building up his words, the man showed a wicked smile.

“...I’m the exception. The sole exception. Only I — am the true authentic hero, Mishis. Unlike those guys”

“.....”

The silver haired young man started walking out of the observatory room at the same time as he told so.

“It’s about time to set the next step into motion. Send out a messenger to that third imperial princess, Mishis.”

“As you command.”

After the maid courteously bowed her head, she closed the door following the young man’s departure.

As she touched the surface of the desk with her fingertip and controlled the machinery of the room, Mishis softly muttered.

“...Do you really think so? Fugil.”

Episode 1 – The Return of the Strongest

Part 1

“Uuh... It’s getting chilly today huh.....”

There were about a few days until the date of the inner school selective battles to decide the representatives for the international tournament that awarded the right to investigate the ruins.

As a Drag-Knight it was the greatest event to display one’s abilities, the inside of the academy was full of tension that was also similar to exaltation.

On the night of such a day, Lux was walking through the school premises — at the courtyard in the vicinity of the girls’ dormitory.

Within the darkness where the stars weren’t visible, only the lamp’s light that leaked out from the dormitory was faintly illuminating the stone pavement.

The main gate was already closed for the girls’ dorm that was located in the Royal Military Academy.

Because this place, an institution for rearing Drag-Knights that was located in Cross Feed, was an important place as a defense point, it also contained exclusive guards and the security was firmly ensured.

But, even so, outsiders who attempted to trespass and peep were never ending.

This was because, for human beings trying to commit a crime, this academy where noble young women from marriageable age commuted and where the super weapons called Drag-Ride resided was, so to speak, something like a

treasure vault.

Therefore, the girls known as the Triad, which was renowned in the academy, had been independently patrolling within the premises up until now but, since he had received a request, Lux was also participating in the patrol tonight.

(Though, if it was just that then it would've been fine. Why is something like this—)

As Lux's cheeks reddened to the present situation,

"Huh? You — I've never seen you before. Could you by any chance be..."

"Ah.....? E-Errr, umm—"

Right in front of the girls' dorm, as he was called out by a classmate who was in a dressing gown, he unintentionally raised a voice of surprise.

(S-She noticed it!? What do I do! If she recognized me with this appearance, then tomorrow, I'd become the laughing stock in the class—!?)

"A transfer student? That's very unusual in this period."

"Eh...!?"

Towards the girl in front of him who dropped her interrogative face, a deep turmoil was born inside Lux.

After hesitating for several seconds, Lux resolved himself to deceive her.

"T-That's it. U-uh.....I was called by the headmaster, specially —"

"Hmm. Well, if we happen to be in the same class then nice to meet you. Mm, as for me, I would've rather wanted that you were a boy, you know. Then again, that would be impossible in this academy"

After drawing close and fixedly gazing at Lux's face, the girl made a wry smile.

(A-As expected, she noticed it!?)

The moment when Lux panicked for an instant,

"I mean, you're seriously really pretty. There are a lot of cute girls in our academy, but none among them are top class. Ahh, no way no way. Another rival."

The girl sighed somewhat exaggeratedly while shrugging her shoulders.

“R-Rival you said.....?”

“Yep, a rival who targets Lux-kun from my class. There’s only one boy in this academy right now. But, surrounding him are incredibly beautiful girls, I couldn’t approach him at all you know. If a beautiful girl like you were a boy, against a boy, the popularity would also be scattered a little and my chance to be able to talk to Lux-kun—to that boy would increase even a little.”

As she pouted in a lovely manner, the girl said so.

“Ah,ahaha.....”

In response, Lux couldn’t help but smile bitterly.

“Well then, good night.Ah! Recently, there seems to be some male perverts appearing around the area, so be careful okay. A cute girl like you would be the first to be targeted.”

“.....Y-Yes. I will be careful.”

While awkwardly waving his hand, Lux smiled as if troubled.

When the back figure and footstep sounds of the girl who went back to the dorm completely disappeared—

“—Hold up, why didn't anyone notice it!?”

Lux, who currently had the appearance of a female student, inadvertently shouted out.

Since he began with this appearance, he had already met with five female students, and yet not a single one of them noticed that it was Lux.

.....Well, I guess it’s only natural.

He was only wearing a long chestnut-colored hair wig on his head and some girl clothing, but looking at a mirror, it was to the point where Lux himself also couldn’t believe his own eyes.

However, even so,

“D-Despite that, I still thought I would be exposed by my fellow classmates.....”

He was saved thanks to no one asking him about the female clothing, but he was having staggeringly mixed feelings.

“Haah.....”

With a small sigh, with the purpose of resuming the request, Lux began to wander around the academy’s grounds.

“W-Was this really necessary.....?”

While gently gripping the hem of his skirt and thinking such a thing, Lux thought back upon the event from just a little while ago.

Part 2

“Errr..... a request to guard the academy’s premises — is that it?”

On that day after school, Lux was called out by his female friends, and consulted with them in regards to a “certain request”.

The third year student and dignified leader, Sharis. His classmate with a lively personality, Tillfarr. And the cool girl who was also a close friend of his little sister Airi, Nokuto.

The request from the Triad, the renowned trio who formed a vigilante corps in the academy in addition to also causing various disturbances, was unexpectedly a serious one.

“Yep, that’s right. The academy’s security is, in truth, the guards’ job. But with just them, there are places which weren’t always patrolled.”

As Tillfarr folded her arms and showed a pensive look, Nokuto next to her also nodded.

“Yes. They also have their lives and the day also continues after nightfall. Meaning it would be impossible to keep up.”

“Especially at night, we, the Triad, voluntarily go around patrolling the premises and the girls’ dorm, but in consideration to the recent state of affairs here, we would like a little bit of assistance.”

Sharis summarized so and approached Lux.

“Therefore, Lux-kun. We have come to request that you participate with us for a short while starting from today. In order to protect the academy’s peace, won’t you become our strength?”

She asked so in a somewhat exaggerated manner.

(As usual, I don’t know whether she’s earnest or irresponsible; a truly hard to

understand person, huh.....) While wryly smiling in his mind, Lux consented like it was only natural.

“I got it. If I can be of some use, please allow me to help you.”

Which he answered so with a smiling face,

“Thank you. Just as one would expect of our academy’s prince.”

“Yes. As expected of Lux-san. Please allow me to offer my thanks, too.”

“Really, just as you’d expect from Lux-cchi. Thank goodness, I’m glad.”

Matching Sharis’ expression of gratitude, Nokuto also lightly bowed her head, and Tillfarr showed a smile.

“No, if it’s an odd job like this then I would warmly welcome it but—”

Odd jobs.

The criminal Lux, who was a survivor of the royal family of the Old Empire that laid out misrule, was given this obligation at the time when he was acquitted through amnesty.

The agreement to receive odd jobs from any of citizens, even after transferring into this academy, it had continued in the form of him undertaking odd jobs from officials and students but—.

(Everyone’s been giving me nothing but strange requests.....)

Recalling that matter, Lux had a bitter smile.

Things like assistance with shopping and cleaning the room, those were still the better ones.

It was not unusual for Lux who was the only boy in the academy to receive outrageous requests, whether it was a joke or for real, from the young girls here who were interested in him.

A personal bodyguard for constant supervision, aiding in a body massage, an assistant for changing clothes. In the end.....when he saw the letters spelling out help with bathing, he doubted his own eyes as would be expected.

And so, towards the request that seemed decent this time, he was frankly relieved, but—.

“.....Hold on, what the heck is this!?”

Lux, who went to the waiting room of the training grounds to prepare for the request, unexpectedly shouted out.

The uniform which he was presented with a change of clothes from the Triad was for some reason a girl uniform.

A blouse and skirt beautifully well kept.

And, a chestnut-colored wig which was a high quality ornament.

“Well you see, since we had requested the headmaster and had her specifically arrange it, it’s fine to wear it without hesitating, you know?”

“That’s not it! The thing I’m worried about isn’t how you acquired this.....um, why do I, with this kind of f...female clothing like this—”

“Lux-kun, calm down a bit. This is for the sake of a goal.”

Sharis put on a serious look and said to the embarrassed and flustered Lux.

“The main area we are guarding this time is the surroundings of the girls’ dormitory. In addition, it seems like there’s some male perverts who are prowling around the academy’s surroundings recently and peeping.”

In regards to that information, Lux was also alerted by the teacher and knew about it.

“If we were to disguise you as a frail girl, we will be able to strike during the interval where the pervert lowered his guard. Letting your anxieties die out in the face of vigilance. In other words it’s a decoy role. This is also to protect everyone in the academy.Do you understand?”

“U-understood.....”

Pressed by Sharis’ nudging, Lux finally returned a nod.

As expected, he could not refuse when she earnestly requested him to that extent.

For Lux right now, this academy was an important place.

Even though they had been tormented with the tyrannical rule of the Old Empire and the customs of male supremacy over women for a long period, the

girls of the academy had accepted him who was a criminal from the imperial family.

If it was to protect those girls, this much was—.

“Is that so, thanks. Well then, shall we immediately move on to the fun clothes changing time? Prince.”

“Eh...!?”

Sharis smiled with a broad grin and extended her hands towards Lux’s chest.

As if matching her, Tillfarr who had been watching silently also held the uniform in her hands and Nokuto retrieved some perfume and a comb from a bag.

“Well then, let us change your clothes okay?! Lux-cchi, you don’t know how to put on a girl’s uniform right?”

“N-no.....! I’ll give it a try on my own! Why are you all grinning!?”

“No. We have no ill intentions, so please relax. Sharis and Tillfarr, and I as well, it’s not like we’re taking advantage of the request and are eager to see the figure of you in girl clothes, because there’s no way we were thinking of that even a little.”

“There’s no way I can believe that!?”

Lux involuntarily retorted towards the indifferent Nokuto’s words.

However, resistance was already impossible.

“Okay okay. Shall we take it off quickly, Lux-cchi. No... Lux-chan”

“Lux-kun, I have also prepared underwear for girl use just in case, but?”

“Please stop, anything but that!”

Somehow he has struggled desperately only at the last line, but after several dozen minutes, he has been completely transformed into the appearance of a girl student.

“Uwah...!? T-This is beyond my imagination, by far—”

“Yes. For it to fit him this much, I have gravely miscalculated”

“S-Should we also give up on the makeup? E-Even like this now, it should be more than enough, so...”

“.....”

While the three girls of the Triad gave their impressions as they pleased, Lux has hardened in front of the mirror as he felt extremely embarrassed.

“Rest assured Lux-kun. Anyone who looks at you right now would see a very beautiful aristocratic young girl student.”

“.....I’m, not happy about this at all!”

Lux yelled with teary eyes towards Sharis who had placed a hand on his shoulder with a cheerful smiling face.

Part 3

Afterwards, having checked on how to walk like an aristocratic young girl and just simple mannerisms, just like that he was participating in the patrol around the premises. However no suspicious-looking person appeared in the area at this time.

“Rather, it would really be fine if no one enters all the way into the premises but—”

Lux was worried about whether he would be forced to use this appearance again.

He absolutely did not want to be seen, especially by his little sister Airi or the girls he was close to.



“But, I really have to be careful in a lot of ways—”

That’s right; Lux recalled the matter from just a few days ago.

In the incident surrounding Krulcifer who’s a transfer student from the religious country Ymir, the heir to one of the four Great Nobles of the New Kingdom, Barzeride Kreutzer was overthrown.

There were no doubts that he had committed various crimes behind the scenes, but for Barzeride who was said to have saved this Atismata New Kingdom, it seemed like it was arranged so that he would be given an important errand.

The largest and strongest Abyss said to exist within each of the seven ruins, Ragnarok.

As the fact that the former Old Empire of Arcadia had released one of those Ragnarok from the ruins came to light, from the Heiburg Republic came a demand to subjugate it.

If that demand were to be rejected then diplomatic pressure would probably come from the three countries alliance that Heiburg was a part of.

For the New Kingdom, that was an undesirable situation.

But, the subjugation of a Ragnarok cannot be dealt with through normal means.

It was a monster of mythical class to the extent that results have shown that for the average Drag-Knight, even if they formed a group they would still be unable to put up a fight.

Lux had already heard the story from Lisha and Principal Relie on the matter of the war council that was being held every day at the Royal Capital concerning the method of subjugation and the unit formation.

『If we were to consider someone from the fighting force of the New Kingdom who has a chance at victory — there would be probably none besides Celestia at present』

The princess of the New Kingdom Lisha’s answer was as such.

She was a third year student and a girl from the four Great Nobles that was

crowned with the title of strongest.

The highest prospect of victory was to have her lead a large force of the army and fight.

As for Lux who had defeated Barzeride who was a candidate for the spot of captain of the subjugation unit, he was in the position of wanting to request cooperation with Celis while apologizing for that fault but—.

(But, that person seems to be a great man-hater huh.....)

He has heard many times of her military prowess, but the number one problem was that.

At present, the existence of Lux as the sole male in the academy was accepted by the first and second year students, while the third year students tolerated it, but when Celis returns there was no knowing what would happen.

Let alone asking for her cooperation, the possibility of Lux being chased out of this academy was not zero.

(I must think of a way or something...)

When Lux was thinking so while leisurely walking around the vicinity of the girls' dorm,

“.....? That's—”

Feeling something was faintly out of place in the corner of his vision, Lux readied his guard.

At the grass thicket of the back gate, a place where the light of the bonfire didn't reach, he felt like he saw the shadow of a figure.

“.....”

“—Like I said, that's what I thought.”

When Lux held his breath and hastened his pace, a voice could be heard from the vicinity of the rear entrance gate.

(They are talking with someone...? In such a place, at this hour?)

For a moment, the matter of the suspicious person floated across his mind, but Lux immediately realized it was something different.

The sound of a crystal clear voice and the elegant pronunciation belonged to a young noble girl.

Even so, as he concentrated his eyes in order to confirm just in case, the side face of a tall and slender girl leaped into his field of vision.

(Huh.....?)

Judging from the uniform he was familiar with and the blue-colored necktie that represented third year students, there was probably no doubt that it was a senpai but; something was strange.

“—due to that, at that time I decided it was fine to remain alone in the Royal Capital. Even though I’m bragging about that decision, what do you think?”

The girl was speaking in a way as if she was talking with someone, but no one could be found in the surroundings.

(...What the heck is that?)

When Lux cocked his head in puzzlement,

“Nya~”

A small cry could be heard from beside the girl’s feet.

“However, in my heart I was expecting someone to suggest remaining together. Yet, no one remained... Of course, I had intended to refuse even if someone suggested it but... Ah, please wait! The story isn’t yet—”

Appearing flustered, the girl extended her hand, but the cat ran away from that place.

(Hold on, she was talking to a stray cat! And moreover it ran away...!?)

While looking at the crestfallen girl who hung her head, thinking that it was not the time to do something like this, Lux moved along.

(Still, I only watched from a distance, but she sure was a beautiful person. —Wait, just what am I thinking of!)

Shaking his head and clearing away idle thoughts, Lux continued his patrol as is.

Then,

“Hmm.....?”

At the edge of his field of vision, he noticed the moving figure of a person.

Holding his breath and chasing after it, he caught sight of a familiar building.

(This place is... the library...?)

The place he arrived at was the library in the academy premises that was separated from the school buildings.

Of course, the building was closed as it was late into the night now, so it was supposed to be deserted, but—.

(Why, at this kind of place?)

When Lux silenced the sound of his footsteps and tried to approach in order to get a better look at it,

“—Hey there, please don’t make a sound. Ojou-chan”

The voice of a young man abruptly called out from Lux’s back.

“.....!?”

It was neither a teacher nor a patrolling guard.

They should be at the station outside of the premises, having already finished their tasks.

Which means—.

(Could this guy be the aforementioned pervert?!)

Lux turned around and looked at the man, but he had absolutely no recollection of him.

He was wearing a thin dark brown coat, with a sharp impulsive look in his eyes.

“Good girl. Now, you won’t try to run away right? I don’t have any intention of hurting you. It would reduce the value when I receive the ransom and in the first place, it’s against my nature to hurt a beautiful girl.”

(The heck... even this person is mistaking about me!?)

Since he had put on girl clothes for that reason, it was going according to the

plan in a sense; but Lux had mixed feelings.

“Alright. Then, would you slowly come with me”

However, the pervert — no, the man who seems like a kidnapper was completely off guard. The knife that was clasped in his right hand wasn't thrusting at the nape of Lux's neck or his back.

At this rate, there was a possibility to subdue him in the momentary opening when the man averted his attention.

As Lux made that judgment and try to observe the situation for the moment —

“I won't allow that. My judgment is — to not permit it.”

An elegant clear voice shook the night air.

In the spot slightly distant from the cross-dressing Lux and the suspicious man.

Before anyone noticed, standing over there was the girl who was talking with the cat earlier.

She had fair colored skin and brilliant blonde hair that spanned until her waist, and bottomless deep jade pupils.

In addition, the girl had an abundant chest that seemed ready to burst.

Lux and the suspicious person's movements were stopped, having been captivated by that beauty which the term beautiful would not be enough to describe, and that was not all.

A detached atmosphere that could even be called mysterious was cladding the girl's body.

It was the figure of a noble girl that possessed the qualification to stand above others from birth.

“I'll allow you to throw away the cutlery and quietly release that girl. You have no right to refuse.”

An extremely calm voice of warning was uttered from the girl's mouth.

Without any emotions of bloodlust or anger, her mouth held a calm smile.

The composure of an absolute being that allowed her to take full control of the situation.

“...Too bad, but I won’t be able to meet that expectation.”

The suspicious man said in a somewhat defeated voice and retreated.

It was not out of caution for the fighting power that the girl possessed. Most likely, instinctually — he recognized the <Difference in Status> between her and himself.

However, despite harboring fear towards the girl in front of him, the suspicious man resisted.

Lux became aware of the man putting strength into the hand which held the knife at his back.

“...How’s that? First off, how about you discard that weapon you have on your waist, huge breasted Ojou-sama?”

As if in order to encourage himself, the man started to mix threats into his frivolous talking.

He was probably contriving to use Lux as a hostage and first off, get rid of her weapon, and then make a run for it.

“I understand.”

The moment when the girl suddenly loosened her cheeks and put her hand to the sword belt at her waist—

“That means you want to experience something painful, right?”

Pretending to unfasten the belt, she pulled it out at high speed.

“Wha...!”

The distance of Lux and the suspicious person from the girl was around 7 Mel, thus it was not a distance that could simply be shortened in an instant.

Even Lux had judged it so but, she had completely surpassed it.



Without missing the moment when the suspicious man's guard was slack and open, in a single breath the girl thrust the drawn rapier type sword device at the man's throat, and the match was decided.

"Wha...!?"

Crackle! Simultaneously with that thunderclap the girl's back shined and a golden Machine Dragon appeared.

In the interval where Lux and the man were blinking their eyes in surprise, that armor covered over half her body.

It was a partial connection in order to achieve a swift attack through high speed Machine Dragon summoning without chanting.

While being dumbfounded at the Machine Dragon operating technique with a level of difficulty that was almost impossible under normal circumstances—

"I'll allow you to discard your weapon. This is the final warning."

Showing a cold, overpowering smile, the girl announced the fact.

The rapier that was thrust was pricking the man's throat skin-deep and blood was oozing out bit by bit.

"Guh...!"

While sweating from his forehead, the suspicious man tossed the knife at the lawn and raised both hands.

The tall statured girl smiled when Lux separated from the suspicious man at that chance.

"Are you unharmed?"

Without taking her eyes off the man, she muttered so.

In this situation, the suspicious person could no longer escape.

Right as Lux took a small breath of relief, *tumble*, something rolled at his feet.

".....!?"

A sphere about the size of an egg burst opened with a *pan!* sound and their field of vision was obstructed by white smoke that rolled up.

“Kuh.....!”

When he heard the sound of the suspicious man starting to run, Lux immediately felt a bloodlust from behind.

“Watch out!”

He promptly stood guard at the girl’s back with both arms outstretched.

Immediately after, a sharp pain ran through his two arms and fresh blood scattered.

“Tch...!”

“Are you alright?”

Right before the girl Lux protected could get her sword ready again, the white smoke cleared away.

The figure of the suspicious person was already gone.

Only the chilly air of the night remained there.

“.....I’m all right. How about you senpai, any injuries—?”

“I’m safe. Leaving that aside, let’s quickly get you to the infirmary.”

With a voice that seemed slightly flustered for the first time, the girl with a detached atmosphere led Lux by the hand.

And then, while conveying this situation by making an excuse of “it’s just a scratch” to the female students they passed by, she pulled the reserved Lux by the hand and headed to the infirmary.

Part 4

“Does it hurt?”

As a substitute for the female doctor who was already off duty, the blonde girl skillfully disinfected Lux’s injury and wound a bandage. He was saved thanks to the fact that the thrown knife was not smeared with poison and that the wound was shallow.

Although they were unable to capture the suspicious man, it seemed like the Triad and the other girls of the “Knight Squadron” were presently split into groups in pursuit of him.

“I’m alright. Thank you very much.”

When Lux thanked her as he was relieved for the time being, “.....”

Without showing any reaction, the blonde girl was peering intently at Lux’s face.

(What’s the matter—? Oh crap! Aren’t I still wearing girl clothes right now!?)
When Lux was about to remove the wig in a hurry, a soft sensation was pressed against his face.

“Eh.....?”

A mass of elastic and tender sensation.

And, her silky hair was gently swaying and tickled Lux’s face.

“Wha...!?”

As he became aware of being closely embraced by the girl in front of him, Lux panicked.

(W-Why, all of a sudden—!?)

As Lux was extremely confused, her two arms that softly held his head separated.

“Ah...!? S-Sorry. You were so cute, so —umm, please excuse me.”

The girl said as she averted her eyes towards the corner of the floor in embarrassment.

Seeing that she was blushing faintly, she seemed to be quite embarrassed.

“N-No, don’t worry about—”

As Lux answered as his heart was also throbbing, the girl just smiled lightly.

“T-thankfully, the wound is minor.—But still, I cannot approve of the conduct from earlier.”

Speaking as if she was lightly reprimanding him, the girl in front of Lux stood up from the chair.

“I am here in order to protect you kouhais after all.”

The girl declared in a resolute tone.

That was probably this girl’s conviction, but Lux became curious.

From what he saw of her carriage from earlier and her Machine Dragon operation, there was no doubt that she was a prominent and powerful person even in the academy.

However, she seemed unable to completely entrust dangerous things to a girl who was similarly a student.

“Even so, I’m glad since Senpai didn’t get hurt.”

“.....”

As Lux spoke his true feelings, the girl became stiff for a moment, “—You’re a hopeless child, huh.”

She said, showing a slightly gentle facial expression, “But, this is the first time someone has said that to me.”

Blushing faintly, she held Lux’s hand.

Lux unintentionally became startled at the softness and warmth of her palm.

“Ah, umm, come to think of it—”

The panicked Lux suddenly recalled something and began to speak.

“Senpai, by any chance, weren’t you doing something before at the rear entrance?”

“.....!?”

In that moment, the girl’s whole body went rigid with a start and she made a fretting face.

“D-did you see it!? I’ll allow you to forget it immediately! That was just your imagination! Since there was absolutely no one I was talking to, there’s no way such a thing is possible!”

“I... I understand.”

It was pretty suspicious how desperate she became, but he decided not to inquire any further.

Reading the mood was also an essential task in odd jobs.

“However, I wonder just when that kind of man trespassed into the academy. There’s no choice but to have them strengthen the security even further.”

“Y-Yeah—”

Suddenly, the girl’s expression changed and her tone became stern.

“As expected, males are our enemy. In order to also protect a sweet and kind girl like you, they must be kept further away from this academy—”

“Umm.....?”

As he called out to the girl with a serious face, she straightened her back with a startle and faced towards Lux.

“Sorry. It’s already time for bed, right? Let’s return to the dorm.”

Saying so, the girl went out of the infirmary while still holding Lux’s hand.

“Come to think of it, it’s the first time I’ve seen your face. Are you a transfer student?”

“Ah, err—”

As Lux was about to say his own name on reflex, “I have only just returned to Cross Feed today, I’m called Celestia Ralgris”

“...Eh!?”

At that moment, Lux thought his heart had stopped.

(This girl.....!? No, this senpai is, the academy’s strongest girl—!?) The girl who was the eldest daughter of the Ralgris family, one of the four Great Nobles, and renowned as a great man-hater.

I was careless.

Her skill and demeanor he had witnessed which reminded one of a pure noble, these things which he didn’t realize up until now was a problem.

“.....”

As Lux stiffened up, Celestia fixedly stared at his face with a serious look.

“Please call me Celis. And if you don’t mind, would you tell me your name?”

“I’m Lu... Lu, Luno. And umm—, I’m a second year student.”

(.....the heck, just what am I saying?!)

Having sensed that it would be dangerous to reveal that he was a man here, Lux promptly said so.

Although she had went to the Royal Capital up until now, it might be possible that she had learned of the matter on Lux who enrolled into the academy as the sole male through a letter of sorts.

“Luno...is it. It’s a really wonderful name.”

With a face that did not know about Lux’s anxiety, Celestia nodded and smiled.

“Please chat with me again, Luno. I’ve become fond of you.”

Saying so, Celestia reluctantly released her hand from Lux and then left.

“.....”

A little while after seeing off the girl’s back.

“—Wait, what will I do!?”

Wearing girl clothes as is, he deceived her and they parted.

Normally since it was concealed under his uniform, the wound on his arm shouldn't be exposed, but it was still a problem.

“But..... Celis-senpai is—”

‘Men are our enemy’, she certainly said that.

Then, the next time she met Lux as a male, just what would happen then?

After Lux took off the girl clothes, with a faint unease and bemusement in his heart, he went to search for the Triad girls.

Part 5

The same time, outside the academy grounds.

In the darkness of a deserted back alley, there was a pair of young man and woman.

The two people, who were clad in a somewhat dangerous presence, were quietly exchanging words while remaining vigilant of their surroundings and staying hidden.

“However, we are out of luck, huh. To think that the academy’s strongest has returned with this timing now of all times.”

The red haired man exaggeratedly shrugged his shoulders with a disappointed exclamation.

And, once he had sent his gaze to the surroundings, he turned towards the girl in front of him.

“I’m the one who is amazed. For what reason do you think that I made you break through the security?”

“Hey hey, you were the one about to be found earlier, Kirl. That frail looking girl was sharp. I make a fool of them thinking that it was just an academy of peace idiot young ladies, but it looks like there’s a need to change that perception.”

“...Hmph”

The girl standing before him snorted in displeasure and turned her back on the man.

“It can’t be helped if the situation changes. I will convey the instructions from the <Black Marketer> to you. Until then, conceal yourself in the shadows with Kirl as planned, Ignidd.”

“Roger that, Captain.”

After the man showed a smile and nodded in assent, his figure vanished from that place.

“The plan has changed a bit, but... well that’s fine. With this, our longstanding desire can finally be fulfilled, too.”

The sole person who remained was looking up at the sky.

Reflected in the girl’s pupils was the same darkness colored night sky with no stars.

Episode 2 – School Life and Her Speculations

Part 1

“Fuaah.....”

As Lux yawned in the academy’s courtyard, the girls on both sides of him unintentionally laughed.

They were enjoying their lunch break with just the three of them right now.

Placing the furnished platter of plates loaded with several meals on his lap, Lux was sitting alongside the curbstone that was placed similarly to a semicircle.

Lux was sitting right in the middle of the girls.

“Hey hey, it’s too early to sleep, Lux. Are you tired?”

“W-Well, sort of, yeah.....”

As Lux awkwardly replied, the girl sitting on his right side drew her face even further closer to his.

The girl with firm deep crimson pupils and lovely blonde hair side tail as features — she was the New Kingdom princess, Lizsharte.

She was the one who caused his enrollment into the academy to happen, he had complete trust in her right now; she was a reliable princess.

They already had an intimate relationship, but in regards to the matter of yesterday’s request, he still hadn’t told her about it.

Since he found crossed dressing embarrassing, Lux wanted to conceal it forever between him and the girls of the Triad.

“Don’t push yourself too much. You, um..... have various things to do with me from here on out after all. And recently, the time we can be together has finally increased, too.....”

With a somewhat feverish expression, Lisha muttered so.

Until just recently perhaps due to the fact that he handled a certain request preferentially, he seemed to have made her feel lonely for a while.

“Ah, I’m alright Lisha-sama. I’m fine so—”

Lisha was an eccentric person, rather he should say that she was very much like an innocent child, but he thought that the part where she honestly relied on him was very cute.

Moreover, since she was not very good at fulfilling her responsibilities as a princess, she continued to endeavor every day as both an engineer of Drag-Rides and a Drag-Knight.

Lux didn’t feel reluctant to cooperate with that girl who deserved his respect.

“You shouldn’t push yourself so much.”

As he was thinking so, he suddenly heard such a voice.

“There are a lot of things that I, too, really want to do as usual, but— it can’t be helped if you’re tired. Should I reduce the amount of time we should study today?”

“Eh..... Errr, as I still haven’t caught up to everyone in class, please take care of me today too. Krulcifer-san”

As the girl sitting on Lux’s left side sent him a seemingly lonely gaze, he hurriedly shook his head.

The girl with white skin harking back to fresh snow, blue long hair, and possessing a fairy-like mysterious beauty.

An earl’s daughter of Ymir from the North, Krulcifer Einvolk was a girl whose relationship with Lux had suddenly improved recently.

Ten days ago or so, as part of an event, a request was made by Krulcifer to have him play the <Role of a Lover>, and he had fought for her sake in order to

dissolve her undesired engagement.

Originally, at the time when that matter ended, the temporary lover relationship should have also ended, but—

“Or, would you like to take a break from studying once in a while and go out somewhere with the two of us”

Krulcifer softly brought her mouth close to his ear and spoke as if tickling it.

The sweet fragrance drifting from her long hair tickled Lux’s nose.

“N, No—. For a while, I’m still a little.....”

While his spine quivered with a shudder, Lux’s face turned red.

Ever since that matter, Krulcifer’s attitude towards Lux has slightly changed.



Simply put, the way she often teased him hasn't changed, but recently the level of teasing has begun to exceed that of "just a friend".

"Is that so? That's too bad. Then next time, I'll invite you again."

During the times when Krulcifer tutored Lux, she would softly place her hand over his; for Lux who had never gone out with a girl officially, it was quite bad for his heart.

When Lux was inwardly thinking so as his heart was pounding like crazy—

"Hey.....! What are you two secretly talking about?!"

After Lisha, who saw that, groaned in displeasure, she broke the ice in a somewhat impatient manner.

"More importantly, we have to think about a countermeasure regarding that woman—"

"That woman.....?"

"I'm talking about that young lady from one of the Four Great Nobles. The third-year student Celestia, the leader of our "Knight Squadron" has finally come back last night."

"Ah....."

With Lisha's words, Lux recalled that fact.

As expected, he could not speak about the matter where he had met her in a cross-dressed state.

"That's right. We must certainly talk about it."

Suddenly showing a pondering face, Krulcifer agreed, too.

"Using morning's break, I heard various stories, but—. It seems that a few days ago, a movement of trying to drive Lux-kun out of the academy has been formed among the third-year students."

"Eh.....!?"

Lux and Lisha unintentionally reacted to the information they heard for the first time.

“It’s the truth. Strictly speaking, only one person, a third-year female student called Saniya seemed to be stirring up other classmates.”

“.....”

Hearing that story, Lux could not say anything.

Although he thought that he was completely familiar with it now, Lux was a “man” who should not originally be in an all-girls academy; so it was probably inevitable that such an event occurred.

The Old Empire’s ideology which had forced the custom of strong androcracy.

Especially, the bad impression towards noble men could not be easily removed.

Until now, with the support of the first-and second-year students, the third-year students who did not know Lux that much also seemed to have been watching the situation; but the girl called Saniya seemed to once again try to drive Lux out.

“Well, rest at ease. I swear on my name of the New Kingdom princess that I’ll absolutely not let them cancel your attendance at the academy.”

When Lux showed an anxious face, Lisha said so and puffed up her impressive chest for a small-sized body.

“T-Thank you.”

Seeing her figure, Lux took a breath of relief.

Frankly speaking, Lux grew quite attached to this academy.

Friends of the same generation and reliable comrades in arms were things that Lux had never had.

(Even though I never thought about such a thing when I wandered around due to odd jobs for five years.....) As Lux was thinking such a thing—

“.....”

tic tic. Suddenly, his back was lightly poked by a finger and he turned to look back.

“W-What’s the matter.....? Phi-chan”

A girl of a somewhat elusive atmosphere having cherry pink-colored hair and a rich chest.

After Philphie, who was also Lux's childhood friend, stared at Lux with absentminded eyes for a while, she casually and softly put her forehead on Lux's.

"Wai.....!? Philphie!?"

Lux panicked as the pretty face of the girl came before his eyes.

".....!?"

While Lisha and Krulcifer on his sides stiffened as they were also surprised, Philphie quietly separated her face.

"It's Phi-chan, right?"

Philphie muttered slightly sullenly.

"I-Is that really something you should correct now!? M-More importantly, why did you do—"

"Lu-chan. Let's sleep early today."

"Errr.....?"

With her usual tone of doing things at her own pace, Philphie said so.

Although the matter of last night's patrolling should not be known by anyone aside of the girls of the Triad, it looked like Philphie has noticed that Lux has been tired recently.

Her action of having put her forehead on his was to check whether he had a fever just in case.

"No, but I'm still all right, so—"

When Lux tried to act brave like he usually did,

"It's no good if you don't sleep early."

Philphie emphasized so as she drew her face closer.

"Um....."

"If you don't listen to what I say, we'll sleep in the same bed."

“Wai.....!?”

With her absentminded serious look as is, Philphie muttered such a thing.

At her statement, Lisha and Krulcifer’s eyes changed.

“H-Hey, Lux. What the hell does that mean? S-Sleeping together—!?”

“Speaking of which, there was no roommate in her room. Lux-kun, don’t tell me—”

“Y-You’re wrong! U-Um — Phil..... Phi-chan, um, surely says it in the context of a nap—!”

While desperately explaining himself, Lux cursed his own carelessness.

Philphie was quiet and taciturn, at the same time she was surprisingly stubborn.

“I-I got it, Phi-chan! Sorry, it was my bad! I’ll properly sleep today! I won’t push myself!”

“Yes, please, do so.”

“Haa, haa”, Lux roughly breathed.

He was really surprised every time at the words of this natural airhead childhood friend of his.

But, this was surely Philphie’s consideration.

This girl knew well since childhood that Lux easily overworked himself.

(Did I make her worry until now?)

“T-This airhead girl is unexpectedly a formidable enemy.....”

“Yes, I was also taking her lightly, but it looks like she’s quite tough. I must be careful, too.”

“W-Wait you two, what are you saying!?”

Lux reacted in a hurry to Lisha and Krulcifer who whisperingly communicated.

Within such peaceful noises, lunch time passed.

Part 2

And, after school when he finished all of his classes.

“Phew..... With this, today’s jobs are over.”

As usual, Lux finished handling the requests sent by the academy and students and took a breather in the dormitory’s dining room.

As it was pointed out by Philphie, he had been feeling sleep deprived recently; so he moderated the odd jobs that he undertook to ten, moderate compared to the usual.

But alternatively, Lux felt a strange sense of incongruity that he did not have until yesterday.

(—It’s not my imagination, huh.....)

He was being looked at.

The gazes from first-and second-year female students and instructors did not change.

But, a color of caution was slightly mixed in the gazes turned by the third-year students.

Though it was not to the extent of being called hostility, as expected the influence of Celis’s return was probably spreading among the third-year students.

While thinking about such a thing, Lux secretly headed to a certain place for the time being.

“.....”

The Drag-Ride’s Atelier located on the school premises.

He knocked on the backdoor of the brick-made building, and after saying “Sorry to have kept you waiting”, he calmly opened the door.

“Ok, it’s all right. Come in.”

As he went inside being invited by Lisha who showed up, several girls had already gathered there around a table put in the place of the usual large work table.

“.....Wait, so many people came!? Even Airi—”

In addition to Lisha, the chief of the atelier, Krulcifer and Philphie, the three girls of the Triad and even his little sister Airi were already in the atelier, too.

“What do you mean by even me? I was worried because Nii-san is too unreliable.”

Being looked at with slightly amazed and reproachful eyes, Lux got flustered.

In the academy, Airi aspired to become a civil official and did the work of deciphering ancient documents of ruins.

Recently, she seemed to work on the deciphering of documents which were recently brought back from the previous ruins investigation; and partly because she was busy with it, they did not meet each other for several days.

“If you say that, I would want to reveal *that* to everyone, you know?”

Perhaps because she did not like Lux’s reaction, Airi suddenly said such a thing.

“*T-That*, don’t tell me.....!”

“Yes, I know about *that*. I wanted to see it, too. Nii-san’s.....”

“Wait, stop!? Please, anything but that—!”

“Next time, will you properly consult me, too? Nii-san.”

As he nodded at Airi who whispered with a somewhat evil smile, his little sister finally forgave him.

“Then, I’ll forgive you.”

Looking at Lux who tried to stop Airi’s words in panic, Lisha and company, who knew nothing, looked puzzled all together.

“S-Somehow it bothers me, but..... Well, let’s leave it for later. More

importantly, it's the matter at hand. It's fine, right?"

To Lisha's steering, all the people present nodded.

"Then first, it's the talk that we heard today from the members of the "Knight Squadron", but—"

So, she spoke about the information that she gathered about Celis this time one by one.

The third-year students knew about Lux almost only by hearsay, but maybe because of the underclassmen's persuasion, they did not have so much resistance towards Lux's admission in itself.

But, if the man-hater Celis tried to drive Lux out, the great majority of the third years who kept quiet would end up supporting her.

"In other words, it's up to her will how we, the third-year students, will move. Which means that everything will depend on what Celis thinks of Lux."

Sharis, the only student at this place in the same year as Celis, summarized as such.

"Yes. Then, should we, who know Lux-san well, first try to persuade Celis-senpai?"

"No. I think we should probably stop it."

Krulcifer calmly shook her head to Noct's proposal.

"Until now, she has always brought this academy together with a strong conviction. At least, if she could feel shaken by our persuasion, it should have never turned into a situation like this to begin with."

"In the first place, even if we, who support Lux-cchi, say it, there won't be any persuasive power, eh~"

"Hmm.....", Lisha, the one directly responsible for Lux's admission, groaned to Tillfarr's sigh.

In the end, it would turn out like that.

As the talk changed topic of whether they should approve not the individual called Lux, but the existence called "man" or should they let all the students

decide it, there was no doubt that they were at a disadvantage.

“.....”

But perhaps because she thought of an alternate plan, when everyone kept quiet, “—Then, there may be nothing else to do other than having Nii-san himself do his best after all, huh.”

“Eh.....?”

To the words suddenly uttered by Airi, Lux tilted his head to the side.

“I see, there’s that way.”

As Lux was absentminded, Sharis also nodded with her arms folded as is.

“Simply put, this means that it’ll be fine as long as Celis regards you as an exception. No matter how much one advocates justice, a human is a creature moved by his feelings in the end. If you make Celis herself take a liking to you, the problem will be solved. —With that said, shall we try arguing this time in that direction?”

“N-No, isn’t that kind of impossible—”

Lux was not familiar enough with girls to think of a way of charming the man-hater girl.

“A method to make her take a liking to him, huh..... Let’s see, shall we try putting up the Drag-Ride’s parts that we have excavated from the ruins recently—”

“Would you please stop with your mania-like idea.....? There are few girls who would be pleased with that.”

To Lisha’s words, Krulcifer put in a tsukkomi^[1] with an amazed face.

“Ugh.....!? T-Then, what do you suggest to do!?”

In a place where a small dispute began, Krulcifer turned around to Lux.

“For that, first it’s necessary to have Lux-kun exhibit his *weapons*, I guess. How about it? Have you experienced an odd job, which looks like it would make a girl happy, so far?”

“Err—”

He pondered for several seconds, but sadly nothing came into his mind.

During his five years of odd jobs life, the clients were various; in the first place he had no memory of having dealt with one long term work to the extent that he thoroughly investigated something.

When he began to write all the jobs he has done so far on a paper for the time being, “Hmm, how about handmade accessories? In order to show his sincerity with a present? Lux-cchi, for the trial before the main performance, I don’t mind you making one for me, too, you know?!”

“No. Please, restrain yourself, Tillfarr. I judge that it’s merely you who wants a gift from Lux-san.”

In contrast with Tillfarr in high spirits, Noct, who was one grade below, coolly retorted.

“Hmm. We can always put her in danger and save her from it. Even I, who am Celis’ fellow third-year student, don’t know well what she dislikes other than men, but—. Ok, after mixing alcohol in juice and making her drink it, I shall kindly nurse the drunken target. While giving her a favor like this, I might end up reaching the destination as it is—”

“Um, a plan where we’ll all be expelled is a little.....”

As Lux stopped Sharis’s proposal while sweating,

“Yes. In the first place, demanding resourcefulness in such a meaning from Lux seems to be a slightly severe judgment.”

“W-Well, that’s right; but it hurts, so please don’t say it too much!”

Although agreeing with Noct, Lux had his heart plainly gouged out.

“Indeed. Even when I made the request of being Lux’s lover, he was feeling quite restless the whole time. I hardly think that he can skillfully lead Celis-san who is older.”

“Could you please end with this topic already!?”

Being told that even by Krulcifer, Lux ended up being crestfallen.

“I’m sorry. It has been a little too fun teasing you.”

“.....”

With her usual cool smile, the girl turned her gaze to Lux.

Except the fact that she was an exchange student from another country, thinking about Krulcifer, who bore a certain mission and secret, and felt loneliness, it was a good tendency, but—.

(Since she's a person who seems very noble-like more than the half-hearted me, I'm one-sidedly teased.....) When Lux was making a complicated face,

“Don't you have any proposal? Philphie-san.”

As Airi remembered suddenly, she brought the subject to Philphie who was eating cookies.

“Hmm.....”

Philphie tilted her head to the side for about a few seconds, and then responded with, “Won't it be fine if he acts like usual?”

Because she gave a normal answer, everyone fell silent.

“Was this airhead girl listening to the talk so far? Listen carefully, at this rate Lux will be expelled from the academy—”

“I think that my big sister will probably not let such a thing happen. So, I think that if a problem happens, we should just tell her that we don't want Lu-chan to leave the academy.”

With an absentminded expression, Philphie indifferently muttered.

To her reply, the others pondered for a while,

“—She's right. That may be the best for the moment.”

Airi nodded first.

“It's a fact that there's a person spreading bad rumors among the third-year students, but it's only a person called Saniya and it's not really like a problem has occurred. If we were to react to it and make a fuss, it might strengthen the opposition.”

“In other words, it's important to unify the wills of the first-and second-year students who already accepted Lux-kun, huh.”

When Krulcifer answered so and the talk was about to complete the first stage, *knock-knock*, a sound of the atelier's door being knocked was heard.

".....What's the matter? I'm busy now."

"I'm sorry. Is Lux-kun here?"

When Lisha, who was the atelier's chief, answered over the door, the voice of a girl who seemed to be a student returned.

"H-Hey, the dorm leader seemed to call for Lux-san, but—"

"He's currently running an errand for me. I'll tell him when the work is over. Tell the dorm leader that if she's lucky, he may go there early."

"I got it. Then, I'll take my leave."

"....."

When everyone lowered their voices with dubious faces, the girl's footsteps went away.

"I wonder if it was a nervous reaction. Even if the fact that Lux was there is exposed, the "opposition faction" should not be able to do anything about it—"

Lisha muttered so, but she could not be quite sure.

"But certainly— it's dangerous to move stealthily too much. It's already late today, so shall we call it a day for the time being?"

When Airi concluded so, everyone nodded and decided to do as such.

"Then, I'll leave first. I seem to be called by the dorm leader. And also — I thank everyone for having gathered tonight for my sake."

Giving his thanks in the end with a smile, Lux left the atelier while looking out to the surrounding.

"....."

A few minutes after Lux left the atelier.

Silence filled the room for a while, but Lisha sitting at the back muttered before long.

"U-Um..... I'll say it now. But, having Lux curry favor from Celestia, personally I

don't want to do it, but—”

Looking at the blushing girl who was somehow irritated,

“Y-Yes, indeed. It'll be good and all that her man-hating is cured, but — there's also no guarantee that both of them won't really become serious. If that happens — I'll be troubled.”

Krulcifer too slightly blushed and said so.

“Haa, what troublesome girls.”

Airi, who looked at these two girls, breathed a small sigh; and the trio of the Triad showed a happy smile immediately after.

“I see; in other words, the reason why you said “you can't lead Celis” to Lux-kun was because you didn't want it to be like that, huh. You also have a cute side in you, eh, Krulcifer.”

To Sharis, who turned a broad grin, Krulcifer fell silent.

“Then, since the boy left, shall we try having occasionally such a talk? It seems pretty fun after all.”

Seeing Tillfarr, who bent herself forward further, Airi lightly clapped her hands.

“Let's already call it a day. Everyone, please do not take my big brother as your plaything.”

Along with the slightly amazed voice, the girls' meeting met its end.

Part 3

“Still, I wonder what that urgent business is.”

Lux, who came out of the atelier, hung the bag packed with the complete set for the said cross-dressing and went to the dorm leader's room in the women's dorm.

He originally intended to go return it as is to Principal Relie, but the plan had changed.

When Lux was walking in the long corridor while thinking about such a thing, “I-I’m sorry. Can I have a little of your time!?”

A girl who gathered her long hair in three braids called out to Lux in a flustered state.

Since the color of her necktie was blue, it looked like she was a third-year student; but he was not familiar with her face.

She was probably a native of the south region as the rare brown skin was their peculiarity.

“Ah, yes. Errr— what is it?”

“There’s a person in this room that is unable to move. She has overused her Drag-Ride and seemed to have ended up having muscle pains. Until I get the doctor for medical treatment, could you please look after her?”

“Eh.....? I-I don’t mind it, but...”

“Then, please! This way—”

The braided hair girl pulled Lux’s hands and took him to a room on the third floor.

“It’s here. She doesn’t look fine, so please lightly massage her body.”

“Ah, yes. I got it. —Wait, massage!?”

No matter how urgent it was, wouldn't it be quite a problem for him, a man, to do it?

Lux thought so and was going to decline it immediately, but, "Please. I've already told her about it after all."

As the braided hair girl said only that, she quickly left the place.

(I-Is it all right for me to do such a thing? But, I've got to take responsibility for accepting the request.....) After having hesitated a little while, Lux steeled himself and opened the door.

Unlike the sharing rooms for boarding students, it seemed to be a slightly small, private room. Perhaps because the lamp was not lit, the face of the girl lying face-down on the bed could not be seen.

"Um..... excuse me."

As he called out to her just in case and entered the room, the girl's voice returned.

"Please, come in. You're quite late."

"Um..... is it all right if I rub you?"

"Yes. I have heard that by doing so, one can be rid of their fatigue."

Though it was a slightly feverish voice, Lux looked puzzled as he felt like it was not a painful voice.^[2]

"T-Then, excuse me....."

For note, Lux had odd jobs experience in large public baths. Of course, there were only men, but he had done massages for visitors.

(But, I've almost never done jobs like medical care—)

As Lux was troubled as to how he should deal with it,

"Is something wrong? If possible, I would like you to do it before my body gets cold."

"I-I understand. Then, please tell me if it's painful."

As Lux explained, he nervously extended his hands.

When his finger softly crept on her back,

“Uwah.....!?”

He unintentionally raised his voice.

It was dim and one could not see well, but the girl's upper half was naked.

That the white abundant chest of the girl's upper body was softly flattened and could be seen as its majestic volume was reflected in the window before his eyes.

At the touch of the finely strong, firm skin as if sticking to him, and at the touch of the strong, firm skin, Lux's heart began to pound violently.

“.....? Is something wrong?”

“N-No!? It's nothing—!?”

Although his voice was clogged, Lux once again let his fingers creep on the girl's skin.

(.....Wait!? Looking closely, not only her back, but also her buttocks, this—) Upon close inspection, she only wore a piece of white thin cloth on the bottom of her neatly constricted waist.

Through that piece of cloth, the girl's well-shaped big buttocks, and well-fleshed body lines also distinctly stood out; Lux's head immediately boiled.

“Should I turn the light on? Saniya told me that I can relax when it's dark, so it's better to turn it off.”

“N-No, it's all right! Um, I will continue, so—”

While parching his throat in nervousness, Lux massaged her back in panic.

The touch was totally different from when he massaged a man of an excavation shop during an odd job before.

Lux's face spontaneously became hot at the rising sweet fragrance and the sensual touch.

Even so, as his fingers remembered the job of before, he somehow manage to do it well, but—

“It’s been a while since I last took a bath in the girl’s dormitory, so I unintentionally had it long and leisurely.”

As she was satisfied with Lux’s way of using his fingers, the girl muttered in a calm tone with a slightly pleasant atmosphere.

“But, an academy of only girls without males is good as expected. In the capital, I was tensed every day.”

「うわっ……!?!」

と、思わず声をあげてしまった。
薄暗くてよく見えなかったが、
少女の上半身は、裸だった。

「やはり男性のいない
女の子だけの学園は、いいものです」



“Eh.....?”

With these words, Lux noticed.

(Having returned from the capital? Wait, d-don't tell me this person is—!?)
When Lux was thrown in further intense agitation,

“Celis-san? Are you in there? Saniya-san was looking for you, but—”

These words were heard along with a small knock.

It was a different voice from the braided hair girl's of earlier.

(T-This is bad.....!)

Lux's heart was about to stop.

This current situation was definitely not Celis's intention. There was no way that Celis, who is a man-hater, would expressly ask Lux, a man, for a massage right after bathing.

(W-Why did such a situation happen!? No, in the first place, the girl who called me here said that there was someone who hurt her body—!) 『It seems that since a few days ago, a movement of trying to drive Lux-kun out of the academy is occurring among the third-year students.』

『Strictly speaking, only one person, a third-year female student called Saniya seemed to be stirring up her other classmates though.』

Krulcifer's voice echoed in Lux's mind.

And Lux did not know what Saniya looked like.

(No way — was it that girl!?)

I've been set up, when he noticed it, it was late.

If the door were to be opened here, Lux would be framed for sexually attacking Celis and expelled from the academy.

No amount of resistance from the pro-Lux faction could possibly prevent the explosion.

“Understood. I'll come back very soon, so could you wait a little?”

“I'll wait here then.”

When Celis politely told so, at the same time she softly raised her upper body.

As the white, beautiful back of the girl came before his eyes, Lux unintentionally averted his eyes.

“I’ll turn on the light. I give my thanks for having come expressly for my sake. But, I must soon change my clothes, so—”

When Celis was going to stretch her hand to the lamp of the room, “P..... Please, hold on a little!”

“Is something wrong?”

“E-Errr..... um, I-I must close the curtains! Because you’ll be seen from the outside! And also recently, there’s been a suspicious person—”

“.....”

Those were Lux’s words with only the intent to gain time but, (T-This is bad. I might have been found out.....!?)

“Thank you. I was a little careless. It looks like I need to reflect.”

The girl muttered with a slightly wry smile.

(I-I’m saved..... But, what do I do from here on?)

He could not do something unreasonable such as jumping off from the window of the third floor.

Even if he were to run outside of the room, the girl waiting for Celis stood right there at the corridor.

While a troubled Lux closed the curtain, Celis stood up from the bed and the cloth which was put on her body softly fell.

Lux unintentionally turned his gaze at her white naked body visible in the darkness.

“.....!? S-Senpai!? What are you—”

“I thought about wearing at least my underwear.”

(B-But, changing your clothes without even hiding yourself..... even if you’re thinking that I’m a woman—. Ah.....!) At that moment, a certain idea crossed

Lux's mind.

Lux hurriedly stretched his hand at his bag on the floor and executed it.

"Then, I'll turn on the light."

Immediately after Celis said so and turned on the lamp putting on her underwear—

"....."

"Ah, u-um—, good evening."

Celis opened her eyes wide in puzzlement, staring at the cross-dressing Lux.

A girl who wore the blouse and skirt of the uniform and put on a wig of hair reaching until the waist.

It was an emergency measure to use the cross-dressing kit, coincidentally he was on his way to return it, but—.

"You are—"

When Celis muttered in bewilderment, Lux's body suddenly stiffened.

(A-As I thought, it may have been reckless. There was no way I would deceive her with this—) "Luno. So, it was you. I'm glad to able to meet you."

".....Eh?"

When Lux cocked his head in puzzlement to the unexpected words, Celis softly took his hands.

"Is your injury all right already? I'm sorry to have asked you for such a work without even knowing."

As Celis completely thought Lux to be the girl of yesterday, she said so with a voice filled with deep affection.

(I-It's good that she hasn't noticed, but I kind of have mixed feelings about it..... wait, more importantly!) "S-Senpai! Your clothes! You still haven't worn your clothes!"

Lux, who noticed it, hurriedly stepped back.

When looking, Celis was still in pale light blue-colored underwear.

“Please, do not mind it. More importantly, meeting you is more.....”

“U-Um! You’ll catch a cold! So, Celis-senpai should—!”

“I understand. Then, can you give me a little time?”

As Lux desperately appealed, Celis slowly stretched out her hand to her uniform on the side.

Of course, Lux turned his face away to avoid watching her change, but even so his heart was violently pounding.

Celis’s aloof atmosphere coupled with her beauty that could be described as peerless, by just being in the same room as her, made him feel exalted.

This was probably the status as a Duke daughter she held.

“Errr, but..... I — not that, I-I don’t think that I’m that great a student to keep company to Celis-senpai. And earlier, someone else seemed to call you, too, so.....”^[3]

Frankly speaking, he wanted Celis to leave as is without incident, so when Lux tried to lead as such—

“It’s not really like I like people of the same sex.”

Celis who finished changing her clothes and approached again said something unexpected.

“No, of course it’s not like I dislike them, either, but..... um, I would say that I don’t see them as targets of romantic love. It’s just ‘like’ in the meaning of being close friends with them. But — for some reason, I’m misunderstood by the students around.”

“.....”

He did not know the reason why Celis suddenly said such a thing, but he felt like he somehow understood why the surrounding students would think so.

A fairy tale-like beautiful and strong girl in all respects.

If such a girl was to allow men to get close, the girls, who admired her, would further pile up fantasies.

“But, it’s strange. When I look at you, for some reason um, I’m captivated by

you. I'm sorry to say something strange so abruptly, but—"

"N-No, I'm very happy that you say that of me, but—"

This was half his true feelings.

Being able to attract the attention of a noble, beautiful girl like Celis, there was no way that he would feel sick about it.

Though, it might be natural because he was a man.

"Senpai. Not yet? It's late."

Again with a knocking sound, the voice of the girl of earlier was heard.

"....."

After Celis stared at Lux's face for a little while,

"Your words of a little while ago, do you really mean it?"

"Eh, ah, yes....."

"Then, on the day off three days from now, um, will you go out with me?"

"Eh.....!? But, that's—"

"Y-You didn't want to didn't you!?"

As Celis's expression looked despondent as he has never seen so far, Lux was flustered.

"N-No! It's all right! I'll go."

"Thank you, Luno."

(I-I've said it.....! Just reflexively.....)

"Then..... let's see. At 9:00 a.m., after eating breakfast, please wait for me in the dining room."

"I-I got it."

"Then, see you again."

After saying only that, Celis reluctantly left the room.

As the two girls' footsteps became more distant, Lux turned the lamp off and kept his disguise just in case.

When he heaved a sigh of relief for the time being,

“I’ve never seen your face.”

“.....!?”

Being called out from behind, Lux unintentionally held his breath.

When he turned around, the black braided hair and brown-skinned girl, who lured Lux over here earlier was there.

“Y-You’re—!?”

“.....Ah? Do you recognize me? I think that this is the first time we met though.”

“Kuh.....!?”

Here once again, Lux understood the situation.

The aforementioned girl that denied the present situation that there was a man in the academy and incited Celis to drive Lux out.

This third-year student called Saniya lured Lux into a trap.

In order to make a situation where Lux attacked Celis and immediately spread the commotion, she probably came here to see how things went.

(It’s bad..... Unlike Celis-senpai, this person suspects me.) “Well, whatever. More importantly, did you happen to see a male student in this room? You’ll know at least that, right? You were in there just a moment ago.”

She stood in front of Lux and asked with a dubious expression.

He could not escape.

She had a calm demeanor at a glance, but sharp doubt and hostility were emitted from her slender body.

(This is bad, at this rate.....!)

When Lux was flustered—,

“Hey, may I intrude?”

From behind Saniya standing before Lux, a dignified voice was heard.

Exposing while slowly walking was Krulcifer.

“I’m sorry to interrupt your conversation, but I’ve an urgent business with that girl. Can you hand her to me?”

With calm, yet unfazed movements, Krulcifer stood next to the cross-dressing Lux.

A leisurely smile floated on her face.

“For you, who is an Earl's daughter, that’s quite impolite, you know? Can you wait until I finish my business with—”

Saniya aggressively fought back without retreating. But, “The principal told me that she wants me to bring her as soon as possible, but—. Do you still need a reason?”

“.....”

Though Lux thought that the request for his presence by the principal was a lie, there was no way of confirming it in this situation.

Perhaps she thought that detaining or doubting would be unnatural, Saniya heaved a small sigh.

“I understand. Then, excuse me.”

And then, she turned her back on Lux and Krulcifer and briskly disappeared into the corridor.

After watching Saniya leave until her presence completely disappeared, “Then, shall we go?”

Krulcifer quietly pulled Lux’s hand and began to walk as if nothing happened.

“.....”

They both left the dorm silently as is, and went up the stairs of the school building, whose door was about to be closed already.

Lux, who ascertained that there was no one in their surrounding, finally asked.

“Errr, Krulcifer-san. Um, thank you.”

As he first thanked his friend who saved him from a predicament, “As usual, you’re too softhearted. After I heard the voice that called you in the atelier, I found it a little suspicious.”

“.....”

“Incidentally, I went to confirm it with the dorm leader, but she told me that she didn’t remember calling you.”

Being told so calmly, Lux was at a loss for words.

Looking back now, the appearance of the girl, who asked for him without showing herself, was certainly strange.

The ones who knew that Lux participated in the meeting in the atelier should have been only the girls who were present there.

It was probable that Saniya secretly followed Lux.

Lux has certainly been careless.

“But..... I’m amazed that you knew it was me. Even though I’m dressed like this—”

Because he did not tell Krulcifer about his cross-dressing to patrol a few days ago, she should not know that he had the means to cross-dress.

When Lux asked as he thought so,

“There’s no way that I’ll mistake my precious Lux for someone else, right?”

She said so with her usual cool smile.

“Errr, what do you—”

“Can you not ask about it? Even I became embarrassed a little.....”

When Lux’s face turned red as he understood what she meant, Krulcifer also blushed while feigning calm.

After they arrived at the Principal's room as is, they explained the circumstances to Relie who stayed for work and she promised to arrange an alibi for him.

And then after having changed back into his male uniform, Lux returned the

female uniform and then parted from Krulcifer there.

“—Phew.”

He returned to the room he shared with Philphie and finally heaved a sigh of relief.

At any rate, it was dangerous.

That third-year female student Saniya was trying to drive out Lux with hostility he has never seen so far.

Because the girls around him so far have received him favorably, he had forgotten; but relaxing his attention for a moment was dangerous.

“But..... what on earth does that girl—?”

A girl who regarded the nobles “men” as enemies due to the custom of androcracy that the Old Empire had laid out before.

Or a girl who did not originally like Lux that got into a school of aristocrat daughters where there were no men.

He could understand those simple reasons.

But, he felt a stronger intent from that girl called Saniya.

“Munya (cute yawning)..... Lu, chan.”

The double room’s light was turned on, but Philphie seemed to have gone ahead sleeping on her bed.

“Good night, Philphie.”

When he called out to her with a gentle smile, Lux turned the lamp off and went to bed, too.

In any case, the Campus Selection Battle would begin soon.

And, the awakening of the Ragnarok, which was the New Kingdom’s crisis to come, approached closer every day.

(I must also tell Celis-senpai about that—)

While thinking about such a thing, the calm night wore on.

Part 4

That night where the moon was shrouded with thin clouds.

One shadow stretched in the prison of the royal capital far away from the Fortress City.

The shadow's owner was a doll-like figure that put on a jet black robe and wore a hood over his eyes.

His footsteps resounded on the stone corridor illuminated by flames of torches and he kept walking at a regular pace.

The capital's prison was divided in three levels, matching the kind and weight of the crime, and managed criminals.

The shadow easily reached the most strict, deepest level among them.

“—Good evening, my dear sworn friend. Are you doing well?”

The robed figure, which stopped in front of the grill, talked to the man inside with a calm voice.

“.....!? You're—!”

The next moment, the blonde-haired man — Balzeride, who was reading a book inside the jail, noticed and raised his head.

Though he was a criminal charged for conspiring with various backroom deals, perhaps related to his position of the heir of one of the Four Great Nobles, he wore fine clothes for a prisoner.

Perhaps because his appearance was quite unexpected, even after recognizing the robed figure's identity — that it was the “Black Marketer” with whom he had made deals before, he was not able to utter his next words.

“Oh my? Are you so moved you're lost for words? That's good to know. It looks like it was worth braving danger and coming here to meet you.”

The robed figure, his eyes still hidden with a gloomy shadow, uttered an extremely bright voice.

His attitude was completely different from when they were making deals before.

It had a trace of child-like innocence, but Balzeride was seized with a strange uneasiness.

“H-Have you come to save me? Sorry.”

When he asked so as to guess the other party’s feelings, the robed figure’s lips curved in a crescent shape.

“There’s no need to apologize, “Title Holder of the Kingdom”. I highly value the talent you have. That’s the number one reason why I came here like this.”

“I-Is that so.....”

Balzeride heaved a sigh of relief to the robed figure’s reply.

If this “Black Marketer” still highly valued him like this, then the talk would be easy.

“As expected of my sworn friend, how discerning.”

Balzeride, who said so with a calm smile, stood up.

“Indeed, I still have some authority left. There’s also a hidden sanctuary in my territory. Afterwards, I’ll have you procure me new mercenaries and Drag-Rides. What, if I break out from here, everything will work either way. It’ll be fine if we just pin the crime regarding this matter on the rebel army. I’ll talk to the consuls that the Kreutzer House has won over, and when we select a criminal of substitute—”

Balzeride made an address as if pressing for an answer.

He considered this to be a golden opportunity and began to persuade the robed figure, “Gohah.....!? Gu-Guaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!?”

Fresh blood suddenly splashed before Balzeride’s eyes.

A dark red horn-like protuberance pierced from inside his chest and sprouted.

The robe figure trampled down the head of Balzeride, who raised a shriek and rolled on the floor, with the shoe that he inserted in between the lattice.

“Hey, hey, be quiet, will you? It’s night now, you’ll cause trouble to the prison guards, you know?”

The robed figure put his index finger on his lips and said with a mischievous voice.

He was looking down at the “Title Holder of the Kingdom” not with surprise or fear on his expression where his eyes were covered, but rather a smile that could be called calm.

“W-What did you do!? Y-You bastard! Guh,
Gaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah.....!”

While greatly opening both his eyes and twisting his body in pain, he continued crying.

The dark red horn, which sprouted from Balzeride’s chest increased in number and thickness, broke several bars of the grill and spread out as if eating away from the inside.

Each time that erosion advanced, blood vessels and skin burst open, and the inside of the prison was dyed red.

“Didn’t you hear what I said? What an irritating person, geez. —I said it earlier, right? That I value your talent quite highly.”

“Gahah! Guaaaaaah! Ugaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!”

Balzeride, who writhed as he scattered bloody vomit, the robed figure shrugged his shoulders while saying “good grief”.

And then, he widely opened his eyes covered with the hood and wickedly laughed like a devil.

“You’re a genius who makes me angry! To make this gentle me come all the way here; really, you’re an amazing genius. Ah geez, you garbage. Trash. Scum. Die. Just die at this moment. Die after fully suffering. Die while being eaten away from inside. Become like a corpse with maggots crawling all over it while keep on living...”

The robed figure continued rebuking it with a gloomy voice, but with a joyful look.

But perhaps he was not satisfied with only that, when he set foot inside the jail, he stepped on the chest, which was about to crumble, with his shoe heel.

“Listen up! <Aži Dahāka> was my Divine Drag-Ride, too. But even so, it has an energy limit. If you copy several other Divine Raiments and use them at the same time, both power and accuracy will naturally decrease. I taught you that, right? If you didn’t get cocky — ah geez; what’s more, it has been magnificently destroyed to that extent, so even restoring it is already impossible.”

“.....”

Under the robed figure, which kept uttering words of resentment, Balzeride was already dead.

But, not even caring about such a thing at all, the robed figure danced like a child playing in a puddle of water.

“Ah, geez. Show a little backbone. So, even the last dosage was useless? Well, considering this guy’s age, the compatibility possibility seems to be zero to begin with though.—See you, useless rich young master.”

When the robed figure spat out and turned on his heel, he took out a horn from his breast pocket and put it on his lips.

“.....Now, then. Without delay, let’s go get revenge for this pathetic fellow who died.”

An innocent and bottomless wicked smile spilled from under the hood.

After the interval of an instant, a violent dissonance echoed.

Part 5

—The next day, during lunch time.

While eating lunch with his friends in the courtyard, Lux was thinking about Celis.

Even if Lux's existence in the academy was called into question again, a problem should not occur until the Campus Selection Battle ended.

However, the existence of the awakening Ragnarok still threatened the New Kingdom, a matter which warranted careful action.

The decision to give Celis the charge as the subjugation commander was still being discussed.

He heard from Lisha that because Celis had beaten up the instructors, whom were male, during the practice in the capital, or due to multiple parties grasping for political power during this situation, there were arguments and disagreements regarding the subjugation corps' personal selection.

(If Celis-senpai goes, I must accompany her, too.....) Lux defeated Balzeride, who was the first candidate to be the subjugation force commander, and made him lose his standing.

Of course, there were circumstances which compelled him to do that, so he had no regret on that point; but he still intended to take responsibility.

"I see that you're thinking about complicated things again."

"Ah..... errr."

To the mutter of Krulcifer who was eating her meal, sitting on the left, Lux quickly came to his senses.

It looked like he had lost himself while pondering.

"Lu-chan. You should properly eat your lunch."

Philphie, who was sitting on his right today, softly held out a sandwich to him with her usual absentminded deadpan.

“Eh!? Phi-chan!?”

“You should properly eat.”

She repeated the same words so as to emphasize.

“S-Sorry. But, um, I’ve properly bought my own meal, so—”

Lux refuted as such in a hurry, Philphie looked into Lux’s face without pulling back the sandwich that she held out.

“You should eat.”

“.....”

Unable to resist the pure girl’s eyes, Lux had a mouthful of the sandwich from Philphie’s hand.

Because Philphie was really stubborn at such times, he knew that resistance was futile.

Then, Philphie made a relieved expression and expressed a faint smile.

“Is it delicious?”

“Ah, y-yes.....”

Frankly speaking, he was so embarrassed that he did not know how it tasted.

“That’s great.”

When Philphie muttered with a relieved voice, small screams like “Kyaaah” were raised by the first-and second-year female students in the same courtyard that were looking in the distance.

“As I thought, a childhood friend is different, huh.”

“I thought that Krulcifer-san was a step ahead, but looks like we don’t know yet.”

Such voices of curious onlookers could be heard.

“No, this isn’t really what you think—!”

When Lux, with a bright red face, was going to deny such voices, “She’s quite the strong rival. But, I won’t lose.”

Krulcifer stirred up while chuckling.

“Wait, don’t say strange things, too, Krulcifer-san!?”

Watching Lux being flustered, the girls happily laughed.

It was a calm and peaceful daily sight, but Lux suddenly noticed that something was missing.

“S-Speaking of which, Lisha-sama — she said that she had a little thing to do, but she’s late.”

After the period of being Krulcifer’s “lover” was over, Lisha also hung with them almost every day; but just for today’s lunch, she said “I’ve an urgent business, so I’ll see you later”.

She was the New Kingdom’s princess, a member of the “Knight Squadron” and was also doing research on Drag-Rides, so she should be a really busy person, but—.

“Lux-cchi! So, you were here!?”

As Lux was thinking so, one of the Triad, Tillfarr was hurriedly running his way.

When she raised her face in front of her while being out of breath, “Big trouble! Celis-senpai went to have a talk with the Principal to expel you, and Lisha-sama went to stop her—”

“.....!?”

Lux stood up at the words of the awfully flustered Tillfarr.

“Both of you, stay here!”

Leaving such words, Lux hurriedly ran to the school building from the courtyard.

Part 6

The school building's third floor, the corridor before the Principal's room had already been crowded with a great number of students regardless of the school year.

"Sorry, please let me through!"

Pushing his way through that crowd, Lux arrived at the Principal's office.

Bang! The moment he opened the door, that scene jumped into his eyes.

"That's why I'm saying that there's no problem with admitting Lux! It was originally my suggestion, but the principal approved of it as well and he went through an official procedure. There's no way that he can drop out at this late hour!?"

"It is an admission that was selfishly decided when we, the third-year students were absent. Besides, in the original admission conditions, it is written only girls of regulated age can enroll. If we were to allow his attendance at the academy, it should affect the very meaning of the academy's existence."

Two girls were facing each other in front of the principal seat where Principal Relie was sitting.

On one side, the New Kingdom's princess Lisha.

And on the other side, Celestia.

The two girls were having an intense dispute, but when they saw the figure of Lux, who entered the room, they suddenly stopped their words.

"Lu-Lux!? Why are you here—!?"

Not minding the surprised Lisha, Lux closed the door and began to walk slowly.

And when he advanced until the principal room's center, Celis's face turned

towards Lux.

“Are you the Old Empire’s former Prince, Lux Arcadia?”

After a short pause, she asked with an appraising look.

Slight suffocation could even be felt in her presence and voice which overwhelmed others.

(So this is her attitude towards “men”, huh.....)

He had heard the rumor about being a great man-hater, but an overwhelming pressure pushed Lux’s body just by confronting her like this.

“You are not someone who should originally be here. Do you understand that?”

“.....”

Lux could not argue once against her serene voice.

“I have heard the story about the recent circumstances.”

Before Lisha interjected, Celis continued talking.

“I am grateful that you saved the academy from danger several times during my absence. But, it’s not a valid reason for you to enroll here. This academy is for noble *young ladies*.”

“But, that’s—”

When Lisha raised her voice, Celis held her back with a gaze.

“If we were to recognize and accept him here as an exception, we would have to recognize other exceptions. The talk about the academy not being a coed school should have already been settled seven years after the academy's founding.”

“Kuh.....!”

When Lisha groaned, Celis heaved a sigh.

Then, Principal Relie also scratched her head as she was troubled.

“I thought that no one remembered such talk..... As expected, you’re quite formidable. What Celis-san said certainly makes sense, but could you overlook it

only this time?”

“Just the other day, a suspicious man invaded the school grounds. The one over there is not the cause, but it will be trouble for this academy’s students if they are careless towards men.”

“.....”

Unflinching even against Principal Relie, the talk seemed to take a parallel course.

The defense for Lux’s admission was eroding quickly.

The New Kingdom Royal family’s power did not hold a great amount of power, the nobles, who were the investors of the academy, would adhere with the Ralgris House who had more influence than the royal family.

If that happened—

“.....”

Expulsion or attendance. While being made to stand barely at the edge, Lux thought.

Though he was about to be overwhelmed by Celis’s intimidating atmosphere, he steeled himself as he took a deep breath.

(Calm down..... no matter what I say here, it’ll only sound like an excuse. In that case—) Thinking so, Lux made a certain decision.

“Celestia-senpai. I have a favor to ask you.”

To Lux’s sudden words, everyone present in the room held their breath.

After lowering his voice so that it could not be heard outside the door, Lux said.

“It about the matter of the Ragnarok subjugation that Balzeride Kreutzer was supposed to undertake. Would you lead the unit for that?”

“.....!?”

At these words, tension exploded inside the principal room.

The existence of the Ragnarok, which rested at the seashore of the Heiburg

Republic, was absolutely a confidential matter that was known only to a limited number of people.

After Balzeride's downfall, Celis's name has already been raised as the next subjugation commander candidate, it was a fact that Celis naturally knew, but, ".....I will not ask why you know about that matter."

After slightly accumulated breath, Celis indifferently responded while matching her gaze to Lux.

"But, it is a matter that has nothing to do with you. Therefore, there's no need for you to worry about it."

Her words bluntly refuted him.

But, Lux could not afford to pull back either.

"Most of the New Kingdom Army's Drag-Knights are men for the moment, but would you be able to cooperate with them?"

"Lux Arcadia. Are you trying to sidestep the issue? If that's the case, I will judge that there is no room for discussion."

"My answer will be decided depending on yours. So——"

"....."

After Celis leaked a small sigh, she looked down at Lux, whose height was slightly shorter than her, and answered.

"I am going to accept the aforementioned subjugation request, but I do not intend to borrow the power of the male Drag-Knights. I intend to kill it by myself. Are you satisfied now?"

"——"

In a sense, those were expected words.

The academy's strongest — no, she was the girl who held the throne of the strongest perhaps in the New Kingdom. Her absolute ability and the words were coming out of her self-confidence.

However,

"Then, I cannot leave this academy."

“.....What do you mean?”

Looking at Lux, who clearly showed a will of rejection, Celis inquired with a dubious face.

“Because I will tag along in your squad subjugation as a member of the Knight Squadron. Lord Ralgris”

“.....!?”

Celis, who was perfectly the “dignified Four Great Nobles” so far, showed unrest for the first time.

“I have also heard about your ability. But—, the Ragnarok is a formidable enemy. I cannot let you fight alone without the cooperation of other Drag-Knights. If I am a member of the “Knight Squadron”, which can undertake missions of the army while being students, then I can cooperate with you.”

“.....Lu-Lux. That’s—”

Lisha was about to say something unintentionally, but she held her tongue in the middle.

She probably guessed that Lux had an idea.

As he gratefully received her solicitude, Lux resolved himself.

“I have heard that your ability is equal to a member’s of the “Knight Squadron”. But, I do not intend to recognize you—”

Celis said in a slightly sharp voice.

When Lux, unfazed, was going to continue speaking,

“Hold on, could you calm down, both of you?”

Relie broke in as a mediator as she revealed a wry smile.

“It is already the time for the lunch break’s end, you know? Even if you deny each other’s opinions like this, you will not reach a conclusion, right?”

Saying so in a calm tone, Relie stood up from her seat.

And when she opened the principal's room’s door, a great number of students, who gathered before it, crowded in as they fell while screaming

various “Kyaah!?”

“To summarize it, Celis’s demand is “Lux-kun’s expulsion”, and Lux-kun refuses this. And Lux-kun’s demand is that “Celis-san accepts Lux-kun’s cooperation in the Abyss’ subjugation”, and Celis-san refuses this, too. So a situation where both of you cannot accept each other’s claims, right?”

Relie greatly raised her voice so as to tell the students who gathered.

“So, you girls, who have heard the talk now, which claim do you support?”

When Relie asked so, the great number of students began to rustle.

“Errr — As expected, I’m in Lux-kun faction, I guess? He hasn’t yet properly done my request, and if he’s expelled, I’ll be troubled; so if Celis-senpai is to subjugate a strong Abyss, a safer way to do it will be better.....”

“Well, I don’t think that he’s really a bad guy, but it may certainly be still a problem that a man is in this academy. If Celis-san said so, then.....”

“Please wait! What you did is called thought resignation.^[4] At least, Senpai should decide after coming to know him well—”

The first-and second-year students supported Lux, and the third-year students who supported Celis.

From the female students’ debate that could be heard, such impressions were roughly transmitted.

“Yes, yes. Everyone, calm down.”

As she clapped her hands, Relie controlled the place which became noisy.

And then, she turned once again towards Lux and Celis.

“In the end, it looks the students’ will is fifty-fifty. Won’t it be difficult to settle this talk immediately?”

“I see..... I’m gradually reading your aim. Principal.”

When Lisha called out so in amazement, Relie nodded with a smile.

“You guess right. Since it’s a rare opportunity, why don’t you settle it with your abilities?”

“Eh.....?”

“What do you mean by that?”

As Lux and Celis asked almost at the same time,

“The Campus Selection Battle that will begin in three days — you will settle this dispute depending on its result. What do you say about that?”

“.....!?”

At Relie’s suggestion, all the students present were astir.

The International Tournament in order to acquire the rights to investigate the ruins.

She proposed to settle Lux and Celis’s problem simultaneously with the Campus Selection Battle to decide its representatives.

“We will solicit the students’ opinions afterwards. We will divide the power in two groups according to whether they support Lux-kun or Celis-san and have the other students participate as well.”

“W-Wait, that’s—!?”

“Principal. What are you—”

Lux and Celis broke in a hurry to stop it, but it was already late.

“This is bad! We must quickly secure strong people—”

“Can we win against the third years.....? But, if we have the first-and second years, we must somehow with the difference in number.....”

The ripple that Relie caused became a big wave and spread out to the students in the school building.

It was an event where it could no longer be stopped.

“Isn’t it fine? Not only each other’s ability, but also whether or not they can get a stronger great number of supporters — on top of testing these qualities, it’ll be settled.”

Lisha suddenly stood up before the dumbfounded Celis.

“I naturally bet on Lux, but how do you feel about this? Madam Celestia

Ralgris.”

As she turned her red eyes and provoked, Celis hesitated just a little,
“—Understood.”

She silently closed her eyes and consented.

“Although it was something inevitable, I have to take responsibility for the events that had transpired during my absence. Though it is not my original intention, I think that I will accept the challenge..... But—”

Celis muttered in her usual serious tone, but her presence suddenly changed.

From the atmosphere as a calm senior to one of an aloof ruler, “If you seriously think that you can win against me, then it is a tragic miscalculation.”

“.....!?”

Lux and Lisha unintentionally winced at her smile filled with a sharp overpowering feeling.

When Celis turned and was about to leave the principal room,

“But—, didn’t Celis have some thought about Lux-kun?”

“Eh.....? What do you mean by—!?”

“That’s—”

To the words muttered by the Principal, the feet of a flustered Celis turned around.

On the other hand, when Lux reflexively approached towards the Principal, the two people’s feet got entangled.

“Uwah!”

They fell down on the luxurious red carpet.

“Owww..... —wait, huh?”

In the time they fell together, Lux was looking at the ceiling, in a posture while he was pinned down by Celis.

There were a sweet fragrance, which gently drifted, and Celis’ face was near his own, and her glorious cleavage also stuck to Lux’s chest.

“U-Um.....!?”



As Lux was flustered,

“.....”

Celis, whose face became red, had stiffened as she looked at Lux's face as is.

“H-Hey both of you, what are you doing!?”

Lux suddenly came to his sense at Lisha's voice.

“Excuse me..... But, you look like him after all.”

After several seconds. Celis, whose cheeks were slightly dyed red, stood up, was about to lend a hand to Lux, but pulled it back.

And when she whispered something in a low voice, Celis left.

“.....Phew.”

In the principal room where the large number of students already left, Lux heaved a small sigh.

“For the time being, we got a little deferment.”

Lisha muttered and looked at Lux.

“Geez, to think that you'll come here; I wondered what would have happened. You, the person concerned, shouldn't act so rashly.”

“I'm sorry. But, I thought that I have to speak for myself this time after all.”

Not long ago, he only saw himself as a criminal.

He was thinking that if he were to just undertake requests of the citizens, who knew nothing, and follow the wishes of the girls of this academy, he would atone for his crimes.

That's why, depending on those girls' will, he would accept everything no matter what happened.

But, it was different now.

“I also want to fight here together with Lisha-sama and everyone.”

This was because he thought that it was cowardly to only entrust his fate to the girls' hands without speaking of the wish that budded inside him.

“Lux.....”

Perhaps because she guessed his intention, Lisha smiled and held out her hand.

“It’s all right. If it’s us, we’ll win. Um — you also have many allies; um, above all, you have me here after all!”

When Lux took her hands, Lisha smiled as she blushed slightly embarrassed.

“Both of you, it’s nice that you get along so well, but it’ll soon be time for the next class, you know?”

Immediately after Relie muttered so, both of them quickly ran towards the classroom.

Part 7

The talk of the Campus Selection Battle, while betting Lux's attendance in the academy, spread in no time and became the hot topic within the academy after school.

Even with such an uproar, Lux faithfully handled requests from the academy and students; he finished everything by the day's end and headed towards Airi's room.

When he visited the room of his little sister whom she shared with Noct of the Triad, only Airi in uniform was waiting for Lux before a small desk.

"Good evening, Nii-san."

It was frightening that she said it in a calm tone.

"U-Um, are you angry? Airi.....?"

"I'm not angry. Yes, Nii-san is surely doing it so as to make me angry, so if I were to get angry here, it'll only make you more and more happy after all."

She was angry.

Though she smiled outwardly, a jet black aura oozed from her whole body.

"S-Sorry. Regarding this incident, various things happened—"

This is bad! Lux, who knew from experience, apologized on the spot.

"It's nothing really. You should just lose and get expelled from this academy. Rather than ignoring my feelings and do dangerous things, that option is much safer after all."

Airi muttered as she sulked.



No matter what she said, this little sister, who was his only relative, was probably concerned about her big brother.

Therefore, she was very angry at the fact that Lux jumped into the maelstrom of the incident of his own accord.

“There was no time to discuss about it with you this time. I’m really sorry! U-Um, to make up for it, I’ll properly consult with you next time, so.....”

When Lux desperately apologized as such,

“.....You’re unfair, Nii-san.”

Airi muttered with a troubled expression.

“Eh.....?”

“Knowing that I’ll eventually have no choice but forgive you, you act on your own; so you always..... Haa, Geez”

“Errr, Airi—?”

When Lux asked as he could not understand well since she spoke in a low voice,

“I-It’s nothing!”

While slightly blushing, Airi hurriedly said.

“W-Well, making up for it, carefully think about it afterwards..... the reason why I called you this time is for a different matter.”

Airi began so and cleared her throat with a cough.

In response, Lux also took a deep breath and straightened himself.

Noct, who should be her roommate, was not there this late at night which meant that she probably had left her the room.

It went to show how important their talk was going to be.

“It’s a story that I heard in absolute secrecy from the Principal. Balzeride Kreutzer, who was imprisoned in the capital..... was murdered the other day.”

“.....!?”

Lux held his breath at the truth that he was told.

“Also, Velvet, who has been confined as a commander in the rebel army, was also killed. Both of them due to an attack from the Abyss.”

Abyss, which originally appeared around the ruins and attacked all creatures nearby, rarely make it to the Capital.

Many defensive bases existed on a straight line to the capital, and even the Abyssal species which moved long distances while concealing themselves never made it.

Thus, Lux felt something unnatural.

“The Abyss itself, which appeared inside the prison, seemed to have been safely defeated, but for some reason something doesn’t feel right. Both of them testified their involvement with a person called the “Black Marketer” who has recently been maneuvering secretly in many countries and it seems that this individual was in the middle of a detailed investigation.”

“.....”

“And though it’s something different, the Heiburg Republic’s administration parliament seems to press forward the military expansion further in recent years. There is also a rumor that they obtained the cooperation of two alliances countries and made a mercenary unit different from the army. Furthermore there is the possibility of the Black Marketeer in question circulating Military power like Drag-Rides—”

“Perhaps that’s.....”

The Black Marketer who sold weapons such as Drag-Rides and horns in various countries and secretly maneuvered the world.

As of now, his purpose was unknown, but he was a person regarded as dangerous in various countries.

“We’re going to be chasing him. It might be “him”.”

“.....!?”

Fugil Arcadia.

Lux’s big brother and cooperator in the coup d’état five years ago.

And the man who betrayed him in the end and destroyed all of the Old Empire.

Chasing his footprints that disappeared, Lux has been looking for him in the country until now, but—

“It’s not certain that the Black Marketer is him, but you should see for yourself. Whether you’ll remain in the academy as is and fight, or temporarily leave the academy and chase him—”

“.....Yes, I got it. I’ll think about it.”

Lux slightly nodded at Airi’s question.

“Well then, good night. Airi.”

“Good night, Nii-san.”

When he said so and left Airi’s room, Lux walked down the dorm’s corridor and gazed at the moon outside the window.

Airi purposely displayed the options probably because she was concerned about Lux.

If Fugil was the Black Marketer’s true identity, by remaining in the academy, Lux and <Bahamut>’s existence would be known and there was the possibility that the academy would become a target.

(But, I can’t let Celis-senpai go on her own to subjugate the Ragnarok.)

There was a reason why the Heiburg Republic firmly requested the Ragnarok’s subjugation at this timing.

By determining the subjugation’s time frame just before the International Tournament and exhausting the Atismata New Kingdom’s Drag-Knights, it was very likely that they were trying to gain an overwhelming victory and monopolize the rights to investigate the ruins.

Moreover, if Celis were to be defeated by the Ragnarok, it would also give the rebel army inside the country an opportunity to attack.

The New Kingdom is in an alliance with Ymir, but the exchange student, Krulcifer, and the New Kingdom’s Princess, Lisha, would not be able to join such

a dangerous mission.

If there was someone who could take part in it in this current situation, it was only Lux.

(But, do I, who failed before, have such a qualification? No.....)

Lux slightly shook his head and stopped hesitating.

A qualification was not something that was given, but earned.

While thinking so, Lux decided to return to his room and retire for the night.

Part 8

“.....”

At the same time. Celis was spending a night where she could not sleep in her room.

Her roommate Sharis said that she would patrol today too as the vigilante corps, so she slightly regretted that she didn't follow her, as she could not sleep.

In order to calm her feelings, she read a book that she took with her to the Capital.

That book, which gathered sword skills, martial arts and the skill of Drag-Rides, was something collected and made into one single book though extracted from what Celis herself had learned and taught.

“Lux Arcadia. Rather than Emperor Arcadia, he really looks like you.....”

While chasing the characters of the opened page with her eyes, Celis softly muttered and made her fingers crawl on its page

“This is unfortunate. To think that the one who came to this academy was, of all people — him..... But—”

After she suddenly showed an expression of anguish, Celis closed the book and raised her face.

“This is the only thing I can do. In order to protect him and also the students of this academy, I can't come up with another idea. I'm not wrong this time, am I? Wade-sensei?”

That mutter, which contained a quiet resolve, echoed in her mind.

Episode 3 – Campus Selection Battle

Part 1

“Well then, five days from today, the Campus Selection Battle will be held!”

The school early in the morning.

After greeting the students in the usual classroom, Instructor Raigree immediately announced the upcoming event.

“The students who are participating are to look at the notice board of the practice ground and memorize their competition schedule. If you cannot participate in the battle within the time, you will lose by default. Cases such as injury or poor physical condition are to be reported ahead of time. And then, we will consider that point.”

Originally, it was a battle to decide the representatives for the International Tournament, which is a mock battle with other countries to gain the rights to investigate the ruins.

But this time, it was also a battle betting Lux’s attendance at the academy and to obtain the right to join Celis for the Ragnarok subjugation.

Furthermore, the results of the students who supported either Lux or Celis would be taken into consideration, effectively becoming a war between the first and second year students against the third year students.

The classroom was wrapped in a strange fervor.

“The rules for the selection battle are as I explained before. And this time, by the Principal’s suggestion, it was changed into a more special contest format.”

Instructor Raigree turned a fleeting glance at Lux.

They probably had a hard time to decide for this time's contest format.

And then, the long explanation began.

To summarize it, the rules restricted to this time would be the following: They would carry out a competition between Celis and her supporting faction, the third year students, and Lux and his supporting faction, the first and second year students; and the faction with the most defeats would have to accept the winning faction's demand.

Furthermore, the battle would be divided into two groups: the general students' competition and the "Knight Squadron" competition.

Because the level of the students belonging to the "Knight Squadron" was in general higher, they would be made to fight against opponents also from the "Knight Squadron".

The "Knight Squadron's" battle and then the general students' battle.

This meant that they could entrust the two claims of Lux and Celis to the outcome result of the two groups.

"Lux Arcadia's claim and demand are "the attendance at this academy" as well as "to tag along on the Abyss subjugation mission". Conversely, Celestia's claim is "Lux's expulsion" and "the refusal of him tagging along"."

In short, to get what they want the number of victories of the members of the "Knight Squadron" and the general students supporting them would have to exceed the number of victories of the opponent's supporters.

One battle against Lux and his supporters within the "Knight Squadron", and one battle against his supporters among the general students.

At the very least, unless he won at least in one of the two groups, Lux would definitely be ousted from the academy.

"That's all for the explanation. Then everyone, give it your all."

When Instructor Raigree went out, the commotion of the girls suddenly spread inside the classroom.

“Uwah. As I thought, a contest will really begin! What do we do?”

“Can we win against the third-year students? The winning points seem to take into account the difference in number and ability, but—”

“Lux-san, you must not lose.”

Such voices flew out unanimously.

“Errr, I’m sorry. I somehow got everyone involved—”

As Lux reflexively said so,

“Eeih, be quiet! All of you!”

Watching her classmates making a fuss, Lisha stood up and cried in a thundering voice.

“There’s no need to apologize, Lux. Either way, if you didn’t resist, you might have been driven out as is.”

And then, as to convey to everyone in the class, she raised her voice.

“We only have one thing to do! There’s no need to be flustered; we’ve to give it our all for that! I’ve already taken every possible measure.”

“.....Eh?”

All her classmates, Lux included, looked puzzled.

“I took all night to tune all the Drag-Rides of this class. Your Machine Dragons’ overall output should be enhanced more than before. With this, we’ll at least be able to oppose even the third-year students.”

“I-Is that true? Lisha-sama!?”

“I say. I may look like this, but I did it after getting permission of the other Machine Dragon mechanics and the Principal. The checking after adjustment has also been done. Use them dignifiedly.”

“Thank you very much! As expected of the princess!”

“With this, we can see a glimmer of hope!”

To Lisha’s words, the female classmates raised shouts of joy.

The higher a Drag-Ride’s output was, the more the power of the machine

would rise; but at the same time, the intensity of consumption would also increase.

Thus, the output enhancement was a double-edged sword, but she probably judged that a gamble was needed to defeat an opponent whose ability was superior in this selection battle, which carried out many short-term battles.

Of course, there was also a limit to the adjustment to raise the output, but there was something other than that which bothered Lux.

“Um, Lisha-sama?”

Not believing immediately in that fact, Lux could not help asking.

“D-Don’t look too much at my face now. It’s slightly shameful after all.....”

Then, Lisha quickly turned her slightly blushing face away from Lux.

Upon close inspection, a shadow slightly remained under her eyes.

“Um..... the truth is, I wanted to adjust the Machine Dragons of all the second-year students, but, I couldn’t make it in time. I could only adjust the ones for our class.....”

Lisha said, just slightly despondent.

But, Lux understood that adjusting 20 Drag-Rides in this short time was an uncommon workload.

“Thank you, Lisha-sama.”

When Lux expressed his feelings, Lisha slightly shook her head.

“I-It isn’t really that big a deal to thank me. To begin with, I was the one who made you attend this academy — I may look like this, but I’m the New Kingdom’s princess after all. I have to take the initiative and move everyone.”

“.....”

Lisha once hated being treated as the New Kingdom’s princess after what happened to her in the past, but regarding the selection battle this time, she showed her duty as someone standing above others and gave power to everyone.

The fact that she did that much for his own sake was very stouthearted and

reliable.

“—No, even so, I’m very happy.”

“Ah..... Y-Yea”

When Lux held her hand with both his, Lisha’s face faintly turned red and she hung her head down.

“Lisha-sama! It’s no good to steal a march on us!”

“Wait, The selection battle hasn’t begun yet!?”

When the classmates, who saw that, jeered severally,

“—You’re quite good.”

Krulcifer also muttered so with a smile.

“.....Excuse me. Sorry to interrupt you as you’re busy, but can I have a little of your time?”

At that time, a knock was heard and one girl entered the classroom.

She was the third-years student and one of the Triad, Sharis.

“Errr.....?”

As all the classmates were surprised at the unexpected visitor, “Ah! Traitor! Sharis, why didn’t you join Lux-cchi’s side?!”

Tillfarr, also of the Triad, flared up at her while sulking.

It seemed that even if the school year was different, if one wished, they could change the faction to support; but Lux heard from Tillfarr and Noct that Sharis decided to support Celis.

“We’ve already talked about that matter, right? I too really want to support him, but there are various points to consider you see? Besides, I can also come to report my side’s information to you guys. Well, only this time, I was requested by Celis to convey you a message, but—”

“.....!?”

To Sharis’ lines, all the members of the class held their breaths.

“It looks like she’ll participate in the two-on-two mock battle from the first

day, which is today. Celis' partner is a member of the same "Knight Squadron", Saniya Lemiste."

「——」

The way she expressly asked Sharis to convey this message could be interpreted as a declaration of war.

"It's up to chance whether or not you'll confront her, but you guys should form a pair with a first-or second-year student member within the "Knight Squadron". Well, I think that there aren't many choices though. Well then."

As she finished her message, Sharis left the classroom.

There would not be many battles between fellow members of the "Knight Squadron" whose members were few.

Saniya seemed to use a general-purpose Machine Dragon <Wyvern>, but considering the fact that Celis was a Divine Drag-Ride's user, those who could form a pair with Lux were inevitably limited.

As Lux was troubled as to whom he should choose as a partner, "Of course, you'll choose me, right? Lux."

Lisha first stepped forward before Lux and stuck out her large chest for a small stature.

".....I cannot recommend that."

But, rejection flew from Krulcifer, who was only a seat away.

"Your <Tiamat> is certainly excellent, but it would be difficult for long-term use. With Celis-senpai, who has great endurance, your weak point is likely to be aimed at."

"Muh.....!"

Lisha raised her eyebrows at Krulcifer's point.

"Even for you, the repair of <Fafnir>, which suffered damaged in the previous battle, isn't complete, right!? Are you saying that you'll be able to fully unleash its abilities in that condition—?"

"That degree of damage is no big deal. Besides, in order to defend against

Celis-senpai's attacks, without my Divine Raiment—”

“U-Um..... you two, calm down a little—”

When Lux was about to break in between to the two girls who scattered quiet sparks, “It’s all right. I’ll be taking part in it.”

A soft, small voice weaved its way through the gap.

The taciturn girl, who was absentmindedly watching the course of events as she was next to Lux until now, slowly stood up and declared as such.

“Eh.....? Wait, Phi-chan!?”

“Yea. I’ll fight together with Lu-chan, right?”

She fixedly turned her big eyes towards Lux and asked him with a serious look.

Even though she said it with a docile voice and countenance, it was a peremptory attitude.

“T-That’s, um—”

Certainly, Philphie was the user of the Divine Drag-Ride <Typhon> and also a member of the “Knight Squadron”.

Besides, he had also witnessed her ability in the previous incident.

She should be an asset enough to confront the Celis’ pair, but “Hey, airhead girl! Don’t decide on your own. We’re talking this through here, you see—”

“That’s right. We do not intend to easily concede that role. Rather, I do not mind leaving the decision to Lux-kun, but how about it?”

As Lisha and Krulcifer objected in turn, Lux was troubled.

(W-What do I do!? Honestly, I don’t feel like I can choose either of them.....!)

“Yes, Ye~s! You three, calm down a little~”

When it got close to being a stalemate, Tillfarr broke in.

As one wondered since when she prepared it, three pieces of thinly cut papers were grasped in the hand that she held out.

“As you see, I made a drawing lot. With this the 3 of you will all have a fair

chance, right?”

“T-Thank you.....”

As he was impressed at the girl’s deftness, Tillfarr revealed a mischievous smile and murmured.

“Hmm. No, no, don’t mind it, as compensation for this — it doesn’t have to be something expensive, okay? Prince.”

“.....I-I got it.”

(W-When I thought that she came to my help, I got completely tricked!?) *As expected, I’m destined to be led around by the nose by girls,* Lux inwardly grieved.

And when the three girls pulled one piece of paper all at once, the result became immediately clear.

“Kuh.....!?”

“.....It can’t be helped, I guess.”

Lisha and Krulcifer respectively raised despondent voices.

It was Philphie, who pulled the paper piece with a red mark.

“Lu-chan. We’re together.”

Though it was her usual absentminded voice, she looked somewhat happy.

“Ah, y-yes.....”

“It’s all right. We won’t lose.”

“I-It can’t be helped..... I leave the match with Celis to you.”

Lisha told so and then began the briefing for the match with Krulcifer.

It seemed that the remaining two girls decided to join for the battle in pair.

The pairs must be decided and applied beforehand, but the opponent’s pair composition would not be known until just before the battle.

The tournament was a survival system; which meant that when a member of Lux's faction or Celis's faction lost in a battle, including the “Knight Squadron”, they would be unable to participate in the battles afterwards.

Since there was a possibility that other members of the “Knight Squadron” would fight Celis’s pair, it would be better not to disperse their forces.

Approximately one hour after, they turned in the papers to indicate their pairings.

Notices of today’s opponents were posted outside the waiting room.

Lisha and Krulcifer’s opponents were Celis and Saniya.

Celis’s partner, Saniya did not have a Divine Drag-Ride.

Thus, judging only from machine performance, Lux’s faction had an advantage; but the expressions of the surrounding classmates were filled with tension.

The Anecdote of Celis who competed in the largest number of matches in both the International Tournaments and the Campus Selection Battles, held the record of being undefeated.

By making enemies out of the “strongest”, who was until now an ally, one could see that they harbored fear.

“—It’s a shame that we weren’t able to form a pair with him, but it’s good that we’ll fight her first.”

“Yes, you’re right.”

But, the two girls, even knowing who their opponents were, smiled without showing any signs of hesitation.

“If we defeat Celis here, it’ll be as good as winning this contest.^[5] With that said, rest at ease and wait for the results, Lux.”

Lisha proudly stuck out her chest towards Lux.

On the other hand, Krulcifer revealed her usual cool smile in a composed manner.

“Well then, we’re off.”

“Um, you two — be careful.”

As Lux said with a serious face, Krulcifer returned only a chuckle and headed towards the practice ground.

“.....”

As Lux saw off the backs of the two girls who left,

“I see you’re popular as usual, Nii-san.”

“Uwah.....!?”

Lux was surprised at the sudden voice he heard.

Before he was aware, Airi and her close friend Noct of the Triad were next to him.

“That’s quite an awful way of greeting your little sister who came to see you. What an awful brother.”

Though Airi was smiling, her eyes were not.

“T-That’s not true. I was just a little surprised—”

“Yes. I am also of the same opinion as Lux-san. Airi.”

When Lux hurriedly explained, Noct followed up.

“.....Is that, really so?”

As Lux felt relieved when Airi was about to be convinced,

“Yes. Simply put, I think that he was only fascinated by Lisha-sama and Krulcifer-san. Both of them are beautiful and they currently wear dress gears, so their skin’s exposure rate is also—”

“Wait, I thought that you came to my help!?”

Since she had a relatively quiet character, he had been careless; but this girl called Noct was a person with quite a foul mouth, too.

“Haa. Well, Nii-san is at that age, so I don’t mind it, but you should stop looking at my classmates with strange eyes too, okay?”

“.....No, um, I didn’t really—”

“Lu-chan. It’ll begin soon.”

When he thought about denying it again, he was urged as such by Philphie behind him.

“Let’s go. I have collected the data of Celis-senpai as much as possible, so I was thinking of explaining it to you and came.”

“Ah, yes. Thank you, Airi.”

Lux awkwardly laughed and then the four of them headed to the practice ground’s audience seats.

When Lux arrived, it was crowded with a great number of students and academy staff, and almost at the same time, Lisha and Krulcifer entered.

Part 2

“Well then, Campus Selection Battle Group A, second pair vs. Group B, first pair. Both parties, draw your swords and equip your Drag-Rides!”

At the voice of Instructor Raigree, who acted as the referee, the four girls unsheathed their Sword Devices all at once.

And when each group pushed the button, they muttered their pass codes.

“—Come forth, the Branded Wing Dragon which is the symbol of power. Obey my sword and fly, <Wyvern>!”

First, Saniya summoned her general-purpose Machine Dragon, a <Wyvern>.

The blue Machine Dragon which appeared in particles of light immediately unfolded into innumerable parts and changed into an armor which covered Saniya’s body.

“I am not good at a fighting scene, but I shall seriously go at it just for today.”

Setting up a medium-sized blade, Saniya told.

At the declaration of war from the girl, who was a third-year student of the “Knight Squadron”, the audience seating slightly stirred.

“.....Fufu”

On the other hand, Lisha laughed at it and loudly advocated her Sword Device.

“—Awaken, Founding Ancestor. King of the Dragon Gods that is an army in itself. <Tiamat>!”

“—Reincarnate. Giant Dragon of calamity bound by worldly goods. Become the value of worldwide desire, <Fafnir>!”

When the two girls declared their pass codes, the surrounding space was wrapped in light.

A red dragon and a silver dragon, both of which emitted a beautiful luster, were instantly summoned behind the two girls.

““Connect On!””

Immediately after that, as they opened from the inside and split into countless parts, each part was equipped at high speed.

The venue greatly stirred at the overwhelming intensity of the two flying-type Divine Drag-Rides.

“I more or less expected that they’d fight with general-purpose Machine Dragons, but..... looks like both of them are serious.”

“Those two are top class even among the second-year students, right? Both their skills and Machine Dragon aptitudes are also high.....”

“Besides, how many Drag-Knights are there in the world, who can fight against two Divine Drag-Rides at the same time? Like this, even Celis-san isn’t—”

Perhaps because they were affected by their majestic appearances, the third-year female students respectively voiced out their uneasiness.

But, Celestia herself, who confronted them, showed neither agitation nor any signs of being intimidated, and set up her Sword Device.

“Descend. Royal Dragon who inherited the blood of supremacy. Whirl the thunderous sound and make the heavens dance, <Lindwurm>”

A rapier-type Sword Device.

What had appeared behind her sword was a giant dragon with large wings with sharp and solemn shapes and clad in a golden brilliance.

“Connect On—”

At the same time with her voice, the armor, which instantly covered Celis’ body, equipped both halo-like wings on her back and was endowed with an angel-like divineness.

“_____”

The students of the audience fixed their eyes upon that beauty and

bottomless intensity unintentionally forgot to cheer.

In her right hand, she had an extra-large lance and a Canon with a peculiar shape was connected to her left shoulder.

“Please, observe attentively, Nii-san. The <Lindwurm> of the girl called the Academy's strongest and her tactics—”

“Yes. Even I, who am a member of the ‘Knight Squadron’, have never properly seen a battle with leader Celis. It is because it immediately ends when she makes a move.”

Airi and Noct muttered with voices tinged with tension.

At the same time as Lux nodded, Instructor Raigree’s voice resounded in the ring.

“Mock Battle, start!”

With the signal, the four machines on the ring flew all at once.

Both sides probably formulated their strategies beforehand, as they moved without hesitation.

When Lisha swung her Sword Device, four <Legions> suddenly raised a growl, depicted four kinds of curves and swooped down onto Celis.

Huge arrowhead-shaped throwing weapons for long-rang attacks, which were <Tiamat>’s special armament.

After all the bullets were fired at Celis, their movements suddenly changed.

“.....!?”

Their arc-like trajectories, which aimed at Celis, suddenly rose just before they impacted <Lindwurm>.

And the one, who was above was—

“.....Their aim isn’t Celis-neesama! But me!?”

When Saniya noticed Lisha’s intention, she raised her barrier’s output and readied her blade, Lisha laughed.

“Unfortunately, that’s also wrong.”

pashin! At that moment, a thin bluish-white flash pierced the atmosphere in a straight line

It was the shot of <Fafnir>'s special armament — the <Freezing Canon>.

It was rifle-shaped sniper, but it had the ability to freeze its target.

Before the eyes of Celis without the time to evade, the cold wave was repelled, and crystal-like petals scattered in the sky.

“Celis-neesama!?”

A high speed marksmanship which took advantage of a opening when Celis' field of vision was covered by the four <Legions>.

To the coordination attack, which was performed in an instant, Saniya shouted.

—But,

“Your judgment is quite splendid.”

“.....!?”

Celis' aloof voice was heard from the other side of the ice which froze mid-air.

Slight agitation and tension ran through Lisha' and Krulcifer's faces.

What has frozen was the medium-sized blade that Celis had.

She sacrificed one armament on hand and used it as a shield.

“Tch.....!”

Lisha once again swung her Sword Device, and began pursuit with the <Legions>, which were used as decoy.

But, all the blade bits were easily repelled by the great lance and they fell as she lost control of them.

“You have become strong. You might even have a chance of victory.”

Celis said with a calm voice, yet filled with a quiet overpowering feeling.

“If your opponent is not me, that is.”

「勝ちの目はありますよ。
相手が私でなければ、ですが」

神装機竜
《リンドヴルム》の特殊武装

ライトニングランス

《雷光穿槍》

Immediately after, <Lindwurm> soared at an explosive speed. When it got closer in an instant before the eyes of Lisha clad in <Tiamat>, Celis unleashed a thrusting blow with the spear grabbed in her right hand from an oblique stance.

“Kuah.....!”

bashiii.....!

The next moment. Thunder roared, and lightning was emitted from the charging spearhead.

“Uaah.....!?”

Receiving the spearhead and lightning attack from over her barrier and armor, Lisha was flipped to the back.

Krulcifer promptly readied her <Freezing Canon> aiming at Celis, but her counterattack was prevented by the barrage of the Breath Gun that Saniya had.

“Well then, let’s end the warm up now. It’s fine, right? You two.”

Together with Celis’ intimidating smile, <Lindwurm> was shrouded with light.

Part 3

“That’s—!”

When Lux felt the abnormality that occurred to <Tiamat>, Airi, who was next to him, nodded.

“Yes, that large spear is <Lindwurm>’s special armament. The dragon’s fang whose real nature is lightning and stars—it is called the <Lightning Lance>. Because the lightning attack also affects the Mithril Dite, when it hit, the user will also receive damage through the armor, and the weapons of the parts which received the attack will see their movements dull for dozens of seconds.”

As a civil official, Airi, who recorded various information in the academy, thoroughly explained.

An ability to pour out a lightning attack at the same time with a strong thrust and seal a Drag-Ride’s functions.

Although that alone was dangerous enough, that thunder which ran through the sky was—

“Yes. But, it is not only that. It is also possible to release a lightning attack from the spearhead. Of course, if you get hit by it, the Drag-Ride’s function will also decrease for several seconds.”

Noct supplemented before Lux asked his question.

“Her attack, which carried electric shock, is called “Raisen”.^[6] If that’s used, even if it’s you, Nii-san, it’ll be impossible to keep defending against it. The Machine Dragon’s movement itself will be sealed after all.”

“.....”

It was impossible to keep receiving Celis’ attacks in succession.

As a countermeasure, he could only not get hit, but it would be incredibly

difficult to dodge all of Celis' skilled and refined attacks.

Even if he were to constantly fly about, the other party had a flying-type Divine Drag-Ride. To begin with, there was huge difference in mobility when compared with Lux's <Wyvern>.

Celis turned into a much more formidable enemy than he imagined.

As Lux watched the match and began to think of a countermeasure, Celis's gaze suddenly moved and met with Lux's in the audience seating.

It was just for an instant. But, Lux understood the intention of Celis, who did such a thing in the middle of a battle.

“—It's coming, Nii-san. This is when she fights seriously.”

vun

Immediately after Airi's announcement, <Lindwurm>, which loitered in mid-air, shone intensely and expended a huge spherical light.

Part 4

“Good grief..... I had wanted to settle it before it became like this, but—”

Looking at the domain of light — the light that was filling the whole practice ground with Celis as the center, Lisha grumbled.

She looked slightly overwhelmed at <Lindwurm>’s Divine Raiment that activated.

“It’s still early to grieve. Even you want to show him your cool side, right?”

Lisha showed a fearless smile to Krulcifer loitering next to her.

“Yeah, I know. <Tiamat>! Show your true nature!”

At the same time she raised her Sword Device and shouted, light shone at her surroundings.

Immediately after, particles of light gathered once again and a new weapon emerged.

The auxiliary armament, <Seven Heads>.

The huge gun barrel, which was the allegory of a Goddess turning into a seven-headed dragon, was connected to <Tiamat>’s right arm and shoulder.

“Now, I shall entertain you! Academy’s strongest!”

She launched a total of 16 <Legions>, which were also warped in along with her auxiliary armament.

All of them simultaneously swooped down and aimed for Celis in the air.

But at that moment, Celis revealed a cold smile — and muttered.

“Can you really entertain me?”

The next instant, wrapped in seven halos, Celis’ figure disappeared.

And then, she appeared beside Lisha wielding her Sword Device.

“.....!”

Lisha held her breath as the spear's thrust, tinged with lightning, impaled <Tiamat>'s flank.

Lisha's body reflexively stiffened at the unavoidable attack,

pashi!

A rifle blast was heard and a flash of cold wave ran through the sky.

It was a counter to prevent further attacks to Lisha and aim for Celis' opening, but Celis stopped her assault and turned, then accelerated and dodged.

Her reaction was fast. As if she knew the sniper's position from the start, she flew towards <Fafnir> and quickly closed their distance.

The moment Krulcifer squared off, Celis had already finished her thrusting movement.

“.....!?”

As Celis was repeatedly blocked by <Fafnir>'s <Auto Shield>, which activated in response to the Raisen's attacks, the <Fafnir> eventually caved in and the Raisen knocked down the <Freezing Canon> from the arm of <Fafnir>; and in response, Krulcifer retreated at once.

“—You got me there. You were aiming for me from the beginning, right?”

“It's a little late to notice it. For someone as wise as you.”

Gaining distance between them, Krulcifer smiled nervously while preparing her drag-ride sword.

Part 5

“She disappeared along with the Machine Dragon!? What on earth is that—?”

When Lux muttered in the audience seating, Airi calmly raised her face.

“That’s <Lindwurm>’s Divine Raiment — <Divine Gate>. It allows the user to teleport instantaneously within the range of that light.”

“No way—”

Lux was at a loss for words.

By Lux’s eye measurement, the domain of light that <Lindwurm> unfolded was about 50 Mels of radius.

If she was able to freely teleport within the vast range covering the practice ground, then—

“Yes. This is precisely the reason why she is hailed as the strongest. She can even dominate others in battle techniques and skills; the chance of winning against her, who can teleport like that, is quite slim.”

Turning a sidelong glance towards Lux, Noct supplemented.

Lux instantly understood what she meant.

If compelled to an extreme logic, a fight was determined by one’s range.

Fighting while maintaining a distance to effectively dodge and allow enough space to counter attack would be the ideal combat situation.

But, that Divine Raiment was—

“Even if you’re separated from her, she can shorten the distance in an instant. Even if you approach and corner her, she can take your back in an instant. Moreover, she’s cautious of Krulcifer-san’s attacks and Divine Raiment, whom took a position where Lisha-sama acted as a vanguard. But with their formation broken, Krulcifer’s ability to read the future can’t save her from the continuous

onslaught.”

“.....”

At Airi’s mutter, Lux understood once again.

Even if Krulcifer made full use of the Divine Raiment of <Fafnir> that she operated, she would have no means of counterattack if her back were taken instantly.

Krulcifer and Lisha could only escape; there was no room for any counter attack.

They were no longer any chances of winning.

Part 6

A high-speed battle where four machines danced was unfolding in the practice grounds.

Lisha fully activated the <Legions> and used all of them to corner Celis, but this time Celis did not use <Divine Gate>.

“I heard that that boy fended off all your attacks.”

She skillfully wielded her special armament, the great spear tinged with lightning — the <Lightning Lance>, and repelled the <Legions> attacking from all directions one after another.

Unlike Lux, who dealt with them using various weapons and tricks, she had fended off all the storm-like attacks of the 16 <Legions> with only a single spear.

Even so, Lisha’s attacks still continued, but as they lost a little of their mobility each time they were repelled by Celis’ spear, all of the <Legions> dropped to the practice ground before long.

“Your attacks are strong, but that they are brittle when it is against me.”

To the words of Celis, Lisha fearlessly laughed while breathing heavily.

“.....I see, you’re really hurting my pride, Miss Strongest. How many people in this world do you think can pull off what you’re doing?”

Krulcifer, while engaging in battle in the sky with Saniya’s <Wyvern>, looked for an opening on Celis.

However, Saniya devoted herself to support Celis as she kept Krulcifer occupied.

Saniya, who fought using a general-purpose Machine Dragon <Wyvern>, fought to separate Krulcifer from Lisha.

Thus, she skillfully handled her two breath guns, maintained an offense and defense in middle range and moved around with great tact without using any winning move. She just attacked to interfere with Krulcifer's movement.

On the other hand, Lisha's stamina was already about to reach the limit.

"Then, with this—.....!?"

The moment when she set up <Seven Heads>, Celis moved.

With the minimum movement, she threw three Daggers at <Tiamat>. Almost at the same time, the seven halos wrapped <Lindwurm> and it disappeared from where it was.

"Don't tell me this is—!?"

"It's over. Scarlet War Princess."

The moment when Lisha activated her barrier to defend against the daggers, Celis launched an attack from Lisha's rear and smashed <Tiamat>'s propulsion device.

"Guh.....!? So, this is—!"

"Yes. A concerted attack by Celis-neesama alone. It's a technique that we call "Heavy Strike"."

To the mutter of Lisha, whose armor was smashed, Saniya revealed a smile.

A simultaneous attack from multiple directions would eventually overwhelm an opponent.

With <Lindwurm>'s <Divine Gate>, she was able to pull it off with perfect timing.

The female students of the audience raised cheers at the special move only possible through concentration and technique, that Celis possessed, and the Divine Raiment's ability.

"—It's your lost."

Bluntly saying so, Celis turned her back on Lisha.

Since the propulsion device of the back wings was destroyed, she no longer had any choice other than falling.

In the worst case, she had to show vigilance towards Krulcifer's side as she was unable to attack her until the landing, but—

“Where do you think you're going? Your opponent is still here, Strongest.”

“.....!?”

At that moment, Lisha grappled Celis' <Lindwurm> from behind and restrained it.

<Tiamat>'s Sword Device was grasped in her hand.

“Grovel in the name of the god, <Sprayshot>”

—Doon!

Together with the dazzling radiance of the Divine Raiment, <Lindwurm> fell along with <Tiamat> that grappled it.

Being slammed onto the ground at high speed, a rising cloud of dust wrapped up the two girls.

“.....Gravity control — so by getting rid of your own gravity, you can remain in mid-air, huh.”

Celis said while suggesting slight agitation at the terrible shock of the fall.

By <Tiamat>'s Divine Raiment, <Sprayshot>, she remained in mid-air by erasing her weight first, and the moment she grappled <Lindwurm>, she switched to a strong gravity load and succeeded in getting her for the first time.

In addition to the weights of the two Divine Drag-Rides themselves, a gravity several folds greater was applied, and the two machines' feet sank.

“If I'm not mistaken, there should have been a restriction in size in transferring with <Divine Gate>, right? Your own size when clad in <Lindwurm> is the limit. In that case, by applying gravity on us together while grappling you like this—”

Even if she were to normally apply the gravity load with <Sprayshot>, her opponent would escape with her Divine Raiment.

Thus, as she waited for this chance of grappling until the very last minute, Lisha splendidly got her.

“Krulcifer! Come!”

At the same time as Lisha shouted, no, already before that, Krulcifer had moved.

After flicking off Saniya, who was fighting at long range, <Fafnir> approached <Lindwurm> at a high speed like that of a bullet.

It became a flash of light, tearing the blue sky, and brandished a medium-sized blade.

The moment when the flash of <Fafnir>, which reached its maximum speed, was going to attack Celis,

Bashiii!

With an earsplitting roaring sound, <Tiamat> and <Lindwurm> were wrapped by lightning.

“UAAH.....!?”

“—!?”

Lisha screamed, and Krulcifer was blinded by the intense flash for an instant.

Immediately after, the aloof girl’s voice echoed out.

“<Starlight Zero>”

Before anyone knew, Celis had escaped from Lisha’s restriction and spoke after teleporting to the other side of the practice grounds.

Immediately after, the gun barrel, which was connected to the shoulder, activated as it raised a growl and fired a spherical light bullet.

“.....!?”

Lisha and Krulcifer simultaneously held their breaths while squinting their eyes at the radiance of the bullet.

The speed of the flickering yellow light bullet was by no means fast.

But after just a few seconds, as the light bullet reached the center of the practice ground, it flickered there and exploded.

BOOM!

A flash as to burn the retina and the blast to the point of being unable to breath swirled violently within the practice ground and the students in the audience seating raised screams.

Roughly 80% of the practice ground's area was filled with light and explosive flames.

<Starlight Zero> was another special armament that <Lindwurm> possessed.

It was a wide area ultra-powerful extermination weapon that shot a light bullet called "Star" which compressed the energy amassed to its limit and exploded a few seconds later covering a space of 300 Mels in radius.

Celis perfectly calculated the bombardment and fired while adjusting so that damage did not befall the audience seating.

"To think that Celis-neesama went all out—"

As she received an instruction of evasion from Celis before the bombardment, Saniya escaped from the attack range a step earlier.

Even so, her expression showed her surprise as she cast her gaze at the practice ground below.

As the aftermath of the tremendous impact and flames disappeared and smoke cleared away—

".....Looks like I somehow made it in time."

"Krulcifer!?"

Krulcifer's <Fafnir> was standing in front of Lisha's <Tiamat> so as to protect it from the blast.

Lisha, who was surprised at that fact, unintentionally raised her voice.

"I have heard the rumors, but it's quite the tremendous power..... It's regrettable, but I'm already at my limit."

pashiin! Shedding light, <Fafnir>'s system went down.

Immediately after, Lisha's <Tiamat>'s system went down too, and both girls' armors were released.

Because they defended against <Starlight Zero>, they had invested all the

energy into the barrier and armaments; they had run out of energy.

“Deeming that they are unable to continue the battle, I declare the third-year Celestia/Saniya pair victorious!”

That moment, Raigree quickly announced the outcome and the bell rang the mock battle’s end.

Immediately after, great cheers poured down inside the practice ground.

“Even <Fafnir>’s automatic defense, <Auto Shield>, had been blown off. As expected, she’s not to be taken lightly—”

“I-I don’t mean that!? Why did you save me—?”

“You have fought until your very limit after all. Even if Celis-senpai had calculated the power, there was a chance, even if slim, that you might be hurt.”

With a matter-of-fact face, Krulcifer told Lisha.

And then, she brushed up her long, beautiful hair and smiled refreshingly.

“Honestly, I was surprised. I believed that your ability to think up tactics is hardly comparable to that of a princess, but you exceed my expectations and cornered *that* Celis-senpai. At the same time as I was impressed, I didn’t want you to get injured here.”

“S-Something of that extent isn’t really that big a deal..... I have already thought before about a strategy of remaining in the air by lightening my own gravity with <Sprayshot>, so—”

“I don’t mean that. What I acknowledged was the fact that you, who is the New Kingdom’s princess, has gone to such lengths regardless of appearances in order to win. Even though I had already half-given up at that time.....”

Saying so, Krulcifer turned her gaze towards Lux in the audience seating.

“That you seriously think of wanting to make him stay in this academy. On that point, I can sympathize with you—”

As she whispered so, Lisha slightly blushed and hung down her head bashfully.

“Wha..... what is it, all of a sudden?! I’m only doing it for my own sake, you

see—!”

“Yes, I know. If possible, let’s have a peaceful quarrel^[7] from now on. Of course, I intend to win in the end though.”

With just a slightly happy expression, Krulcifer lent a hand to Lisha sitting on the ground.

Celis watched that scene from a slightly remote place.

“.....”

Part 7

“They have been defeated, huh. Both of them.....”

Airi, which commented next to Lux, said so with a faint sigh.

“Yes. But, I think that they put up a fairly good fight. They have done this much against that Celis-senpai—”

Noct nodded in agreement, but immediately after, she asked a question.

“However, what on earth happened in the last offense and defense? The moment when Krulcifer-san slashed at Celis-senpai, I did not see anything as the area became dazzling, but.....”

“She attacked herself..... Is what I think.”

“Eh?”

Airi and Noct were puzzled at the small voice which was heard next to Lux.

It was because Philphie, who was watching the battle absentmindedly so far, suddenly muttered so.

“—As I thought, it was that, huh.”

Even Lux, who was looking at the practice ground with a serious expression, could not help but nod.

“W-What do you mean, both of you? At that instant, what happened—?”

Airi questioned the two with a perplexed expression, “At that time, Celis-senpai attacked herself with her <Lightning Lance>. And probably with an electric shock with high output near to maximum at that..... And then, it inflicted damage to Lisha-sama and <Tiamat> who was grappling her and she shook off the restriction.”

“No way—”

Even the usually composed Noct showed a surprised expression.

There were probably almost no people in this audience seating that noticed the offense and defense at that instant.

Celis, who received an unexpected attack by being grappled from behind, shot the Raisen regardless of the damage to herself, undid Lisha's restriction and teleported with <Divine Gate>. Furthermore, she fired the other special armament, <Starlight Zero>, and decided the match.

Moreover, at that moment, she also used the flash by Raisen, that she attacked herself with, to blind Krulcifer.

Lux had heard that <Fafnir>'s Divine Raiment of future foresight was realized through the sight of Krulcifer who was its user. Thus, it might be invalidated by removing their visibility itself.

But, what Lux found frightening above all was the judgment and the ability to execute such a feat.

"Which reminds me..... I have heard it in the rumors. She seems to have a high disposition with the sword and as a Drag-Knight, but among them, she possesses a unique talent."

Airi said as she remembered while looking at the practice ground.

"Memorizing tactics that cover all types of situations and swiftly executing the best countermeasures — among the military officers of the capital, being able to do this seems to be called 'Maneuvers on the Book'."

"Maneuvers, on the Book....."

An instantaneous ability in thinking that allowed her to show a frightening reaction during only few seconds and reverse her predicament.

It was not just her skills of operating a Machine Dragon and <Lindwurm>'s high performance.

(That's the academy's strongest girl, huh.....)

Lux once again felt her bottomless ability.

"....."

Philphie lightly poked Lux's shoulder from nearby.

"Lu-chan. Let's go pay a visit to the two of them."

".....Ah, yes. You're right."

For the time being, he was worried about Lisha's and Krulcifer's conditions.

Lux stood up and left the audience seating with Philphie and company.

Part 8

For these past few days, several temporary rest rooms had been prepared to tend to the injured in the Campus Selection Battle.

As Lux headed to that medical office at a quick pace after having parted from Philphie and Noct, who had individual battles immediately after and Airi who had work to do—

“Ah.....!?”

“.....”

Celis was just walking alone from the opposite side of the corridor facing the courtyard.

She was walking with steps so steady that it'd be unthinkable that they were someone who had just finished a fierce battle. She turned a somewhat confused gaze at Lux.

“It was a little unexpected.”

Putting a hand on her big chest, Celis muttered as if talking to herself.

“Those girls, who detain you, seem to fight for your sake from their true feelings.”

Celis probably felt firsthand the will and resolution of Lisha and Krulcifer through the fight earlier.

Her aloof presence of leader loosened only slightly.

But in the next moment, a strong wave of hostility swept over Lux and made his spine shiver.

“But, my will cannot be shaken, either. You are still an unneeded person in this academy. I will prove it in the next fight with you.”

“.....”

So, this was a noble born.

So, this was the power of the Ralgris House, one of the Four Great Nobles.

The figure of the girl who had undergone all kinds of training since she was a child in order to fight and be established to stand above others.

(That's right. As expected, this girl's resolution is different.....) The girl, who since childhood had fought while abandoning any other way of life.

For Lux, who was not able to carry out his duty as a Prince before, Celis was too formidable an opponent, but, "You're a very strong person."

So as not to lose to her unshakeable will, Lux further declared.

"But — this time, I will absolutely not lose, too."

Just like when he decided to destroy the Old Empire before, Lux once again decided.

He would bear the New Kingdom's future and become their strength.

And he would accomplish it in this academy where he was nearer than anywhere else.

"....."

Meeting his straightforward gaze, Celis held her breath for a moment.

But, she immediately returned to her usual aloof presence and walked away as she went past him.

".....Phew."

I've said it.

In order to chase the Black Marketer — the existence appearing to be Fugil that maneuvered secretly in various places, there was also the choice of leaving the academy and concealing his figure.

But,

"I know that it's luxury, but..."

He wanted to help the girls of the academy while he was still in the academy.

Lux took a deep breath and began to walk.

Then, he caught sight of the academy's exclusive woman doctor, who just came out of the medical office's door.

“Ara, what are you doing in this place? Did you perhaps also come to pay a visit to the injured girls of earlier? I’m on my way to go see the situation in another room though.”

“Ah, yes. U-Um — are both of them all right?”

Lux asked while being slightly tense.

Then, as the woman doctor leaked a wry smile,

“You are the two girls’ friend if I remember correctly. They would be troubled if you were to see them in their current appearances, so it’s better not to go in yet, you know?”

“Eh.....!? Don’t tell me that they—”

After the end of the mock battle with Celis, there should not have been any conspicuous external wounds, but were they perhaps seriously injured?

Lux, who was driven by uneasiness, hastily ran to the medical office and put his hand on the doorknob.

“Lisha-sama! Krulcifer-san!”

bang! As he vigorously opened the door, an unexpected scene spread out over there.

Bandages were wound on the hands and feet of the girls sitting on a bed.

But, it was not the point of being painful to look at, it was just around one or two places.

However, other than that there was an amazing sight.

Probably because they were going to change their dress gears, which already fitted their bodies and made their body lines stand out, after their treatment, they were in a state where they took off all their clothes.

Their uniforms and underwear for changing clothes were just scattered on the bed where both the girls were sitting.

The girls, who saw Lux’s figure, blushed and promptly covered their bodies.

“—!?”

Lux's head instantly flushed at the sight of the two girls, who were known as prominent beauties even in the academy.

Lux should have reflexively averted his eyes, but maybe that was a man's sad nature, after fully pausing a few seconds, “I-I'm sorry!?”

He told them so and vigorously closed the door.

Haa, Haa..... as he washed off the sweat from his forehead, the exclusive woman doctor smiled wryly as she saw it.

“Even though I said not to get in since they were changing.”

“Please, say that earlier!?”

Lux shouted with all his power, his face still bright red, and waited for a while for Lisha and Krulcifer in the medical office to call out to him.



扉を開くと、そこには
予想もしていなかった
光景が広がっていた。

「リーシャ様！
クルルシファーさん！」

ツ!?

Part 9

“I’m really sorry.....”

A few minutes later, when the girls finished changing and the throbbing of Lux’s heart had somewhat settled down, Lux, who went into the medical office, suddenly bowed his head.

“.....”

In contrast, after Lisha lightly coughed,

“.....It’s that, right? In truth, you’re doing it on purpose, right!? What are you thinking about, you pervert!”

As her cheeks were red in bashfulness, she scolded while being flustered.

“Lux-kun. It looks like you didn’t listen to my warning last time. I told you to be careful in various ways since you’re the only man in this academy, right?”

Beside her, Krulcifer also admonished him with a cool face, but as expected her face was slightly red.

“I have no excuse.....”

When Lux muttered so while hanging his head crestfallenly,

“W-Well — as I’ll have you fully reflect on it later, h-how was it?”

“Eh? H-How was what?”

“W-What, you ask? Um, isn’t it obvious!? About earlier.....”

While bashfully looking away at a corner of the floor, Lisha asked so.

At that reaction of hers, Lux thought while being shaken.

(A-About earlier, meaning it’s that after all, right? But, I probably suck at praising a girl, so.....) It was already bad to tell what he learned as the shopkeeper of a bar where he had once worked odd jobs.

He could only go about it with his own words.

(.....All right, I decided!)

“U-Um— Lisha-sama’s body is feminine even though it’s small; it’s very sexy and cute and to be frank, I got excited.....”

“.....!? Uh, aw.....”

The face of Lisha, who heard his words, became bright red until her neck.

(Wait, it’s no good!? What am I thinking!? Your hair is beautiful..... or the like, there were many other choices like that, right!?) He had thought that it was because of the bar where he had done odd jobs until then, but Lux himself completely sucked at praising.

“I-I didn’t mean that, I’m talking about the fight earlier—”

“.....”

(And moreover, I was mistaken.....!)

He made a great misunderstanding and ended up blurting out something embarrassing.

And so, he thought that Lisha would definitely get angry but,

“W-What a helpless guy you’re..... Really, you pervert.....”

(Wait, huh.....?)

The concerned Lisha moved both her hands around restlessly as though troubled with a somewhat feverish expression and averted her eyes from Lux.

Though she looked embarrassed, she did not seem to hate it.

(.....What is it, I wonder?)

When Lux wondered such a thing, Krulcifer spoke.

“Lux-kun. I’ll ask you honestly too, but um — what kind of girl’s body is to your liking?”

“.....Wait, what are you saying all of a sudden!? Krulcifer-san!?”

When Lux was flustered as he was asked a quite unexpected question, “It’s just as stated. I thought of using what you thought when you saw me now, as

reference for the future.”

“E-Errr— Um, it was very beautiful. Be it your white skin, your thighs or your buttocks. It made my heart throb quite a bit.....”

“.....I see. Which means I can assume that after seeing me, Lux-kun, you were driven by a masculine impulse, right?”

“.....”

“In other words, Lux-kun has always harbored my appearance with indecent delusions like what you saw earlier, is that it?”

“No, wait a minute!? It’s not really like I’m..... a-always looking at Krulcifer-san with such eyes!?”

“That means that you *occasionally* looked at me with such eyes, huh. I’m a little relieved.”

Krulcifer said with her usual cool expression mixing a mischievous smile.

Her face showed happiness which the mature-looking her did not show usually.

“T-That’s— wait, why are you making me say strange things since a little while ago!?”

“Ara, it’s natural to make you feel embarrassed as much, right? You also made us feel embarrassed, so being properly teased is a way of taking responsibility.”

“.....”

Being said so, Lux could not argue.

But conversely speaking, he was forgiven with only that. Knowing that it meant as such, Lux inwardly thanked her.

“W-Well, putting that matter aside for the time being, um— I’m sorry about the fight earlier.”

As their talk was settled, Lisha said in a small voice while hanging her head.

“I may look like this, but I challenged her with the intention of certain victory, but..... As expected, someone like me is just— Ah.....”

When she showed just a slightly languorous expression, Lux reflexively took her small hands.

“That’s not true. Lisha-sama, you were very cool earlier.”

Lux said so with a smile filled with deep affection.

A girl, who was puzzled about her own existence despite assuming the status of the New Kingdom’s princess.

Lux conveyed his honest feelings to Lisha, who fought while suffering from her qualification as a princess.

“.....R-Really?”

“Yes, you were amazing. Even the surroundings will think ‘as expected of the New Kingdom’s princess’— ah”

As he started saying so, Lux unintentionally shut his mouth.

This was because he thought that Lisha might hold resistance for being called princess.

But—

“N-No, It’s not a bad feeling for being recognized as a princess by you and everyone in the academy. Um, I’m also happy about that, but if you could gently strok my head a little—”

She muttered with a faint voice and looked up at Lux with upturned eyes. But, “Yes. Also, Krulcifer-san, too, thank you for having held out in various ways and showing me Celis-senpai’s way of fighting.”

“Hey, is my turn over!?”

Maybe because she spoke in such a small voice that he could not hear, Lux had already spoken words of gratitude to Krulcifer.

“<Fafnir> wasn’t in its perfect condition, so I could only do that much. *That much* in order to connect to your fight, that is. But — she’s really a tough opponent.”

“Muuh.....”

Although Lisha looked slightly displeased, she pulled herself together and

cleared her throat.

“That’s right, we must first win or it’ll be useless. Lux! We’ll go to my atelier from here on!”

“.....Eh?”

Seeing Lisha, who got off from the bed and vigorously stuck out her chest, Lux was seized with uneasiness.

“Ah, but. About that thing you remodeled before, you should stop it—”

Lisha had remodeled the <Wyvern>, which Lux had its armor and output adjusted for defense specialization because of some circumstances, for attack specialization.

Since he could not publicly use <Bahamut> in the Selection Battle this time, he could only fight with a <Wyvern> that was overwhelmingly inferior in performance.

But, no matter how much she adjusted a <Wyvern>, she did not think that just a mere general-purpose Machine Dragon would be effective against Celis.

Even so, Lisha declared full of confidence.

“Don’t worry. If my guess is right, those third-year lots would definitely be amazed tomorrow! Krulcifer, you come, too! The partner in the actual fight is necessary.”

Being randomly led by the energetic Lisha, Lux and company headed to the Drag-Rides’ atelier.

Then as they carried out “countermeasures” for roughly several hours, the first day of the Campus Selection Battle ended.

Part 10

Within a deep darkness — on a disused road of the first block of Cross Feed, four men and women gathered.

One was a girl with long hair spreading roughly, with a sharp glint.

One was a young man with ruffled reddish brown hair like a rooster.

One was a small silhouette that one did not know whether it was a man or a woman and that wore a round mask with graffiti on their face.

And, a black robed figure stood on top of debris piled up in heaps, with the moonlight at his back.

“—So, did you finally find that loot? I hope you guys won’t disappoint me too much.”

While looking down with a smile pasted on his face, the robed figure spoke.

In contrast, the three people were positioned like subordinates; first the long-haired girl raised her face.

Towards the carefree, innocent voice, the girl answered with a voice tinged with slight tension.

“I’m sorry, but no— we’ve just pinpointed a place where it might be. As expected, there’s no gap in the academy’s site.”

“.....”

The robed figure remained silent with a smile as is.

That was above all terrifying for the three men and women waiting below.

The bloody Black Marketeer.

That was the alias of the robed figure currently standing before them.

The arms dealer, who wandered from country to country, maneuvered

secretly and peddled various weapons and information these past several years.

His business partners were not fixed, and his backings and affiliations were unknown.

It was an existence upon who all were wrapped in mystery, but there was only one thing certain.

After being involved with this person, a bloody disaster would certainly befall.

Thus, these three people, and also the administrative parliaments of the countries they belonged to, for fear of the Black Marketeer, sought his cooperation.

“—But, if I’m given just a little more time, I’ll definitely find it.”

The long-haired girl fearfully requested.

But, the robe figure laughed as his shoulders shook.

“Unfortunately, I’m also busy, you see? I can’t afford to wait anymore than this. Besides, I owe a debt to the Prince over there. That’s why I’m already moving. I’m done with using petty tricks. I’ll directly smash that academy and then slowly dig it up later.”

“Then—”

At his words, the red-haired man spoke.

“Yea, we’ll finally move *that*. It’s your turn, Heiburg’s dogs.”

The robed figure lifted the corner of his mouth.

A smile like the crescent moon floating behind him stood out from the dark shadow.

Episode 4 – The Girl's Truth

Part 1

The second morning of the campus selection battle started quietly.

The content of the day was almost the same as yesterday, after listening to the brief schedule inside the classroom, what was left was only carrying out the competition with determination.

But, looking at the competition results of yesterday that were put up, a bit of a depressed atmosphere was flowing inside the second year students' classroom where Lux was at.

「This is harsh isn't it? As expected, is it still impossible for us to win against the third year students?」

「I also, worked really hard but, huhh.....」

「That, Lux-kun. Sorry.....」

On and on, the figures of classmates grumbling could be seen here and there.

The match this time was betting two things. The right of Lux to stay in the Academy, and the right to join SyvallesKnight Order with the premise that Lux would then cooperate with the Abyss subjugation.

Celis and her supporters, the third year students, against Lux and his supporters, the first and second year students. At present, this fight went mostly as expected, with the third year students obtaining slightly more victories.

Currently, the score of the first and second year students was 33 points, while

the score the third year students obtained was 52 points. There was a clear difference.

The score wasn't decided simply by the number of victories, in the case that the lower year student won against the upper year students, the obtained points would be more than when the reverse happened. But even after taking that into consideration, as expected, in the present situation there was a strong indication of their defeat.

「Please don't worry about it. I will also work hard today.」

Lux, who was apologized to, responded like that with a smile.

「Ri, right.....」

The classmate girls nodded, but their voices weren't really bright.

Because today there was a turn for Lux to come out in the individual battles.

There wasn't any schedule of a direct confrontation with Celis, but there was a schedule of three consecutive battles against the third year students of Syvalles who had been winning since yesterday.

There wouldn't be that much of a problem if it was only fighting.

But, Lux was the Weakest Undefeated who wouldn't start attacking from his initiative and used battle tactics that specialized in defense.

In the fight like this time where they wouldn't get a score unless they won, the affinity was bad.

Since Lisha and Krulcifer were defeated on the first day, if Lux didn't win in today's individual battle, then that meant an almost guaranteed loss.

Because the classmates knew of that situation, they were showing anxious expressions but—

「.....Yosh.」

The match time was approaching, so Lux stood up from his seat and exited the classroom.

Because Lisha and Krulcifer had exhaustion piling up from yesterday's fierce battle, they were receiving examination in the medical office once more.

And so, Lux was heading to the practice ground for the time being with Philuffy and Tillfur, but—

「Good morning.」

At the walkway inside the academy ground that continued to the practice ground, a voice suddenly called out from behind.

A girl with braided black hair and brown skin. At a glance, she gave an intellectual impression to the people looking at her.

Saniya Lemiste, the girl who idolized Celis as 『Onee-sama』 was standing there.

「Good morning.」

「Goo-od morning.」

After Lux responded like that a bit later, Tillfur beside him also returned the greeting with a conflicted face. Philuffy also nodded her head lightly.

「Hey, I have a bit of earnest consultation I want to have with you. Won't you abstain from your next match with me?」

Then, Saniya made an expression that was slightly mixed with sarcasm and said such thing to him.

「.....Yes? What are you saying Saniya-senpai? In the first place, today for the first time, Lux-chi will participate in the internal selection battle—」

The moment Tillfur tilted her head in puzzlement, Saniya laughed.

「That's why I'm saying that. It's more efficient to have you quit before the match. Because, he cannot win anyway, can he? Whether it's against me or any other third year student of Syvalles.」

Saniya announced with a smile that was already convinced of her victory.

Lux's alias at the royal capital was the Weakest Undefeated.

A battle tactic that totally devoted himself to perfect evasion and defense without attacking at all.

But, in the campus selection battle this time, in order to select the representatives, there would be no draw, the match result would be decided

with decision.

And then, Lux's battle style that wouldn't start attacking from his initiative wouldn't be able to earn the evaluation for the decision.

Thus, Lux was at an overwhelming disadvantage. Saniya said her words based on that fact that she saw through.

「Celis-neesama is really busy you see. Because of your fault, she has to do this unnecessary battle, it's really a bother for everyone. Everyone in this academy, just so you know. That's why, I want you to give up like a sportsman and surrender already. If you do that, this will end without the first and second year students losing unsightly and exposing shameful conduct for more than this. —Just like the girls yesterday.」

The obvious provocation of the girl caused Tillfur to make a complicated and troubled face.

「Eee..... now see here, Saniya-senpai. This is still the second day. Saying that is a bit—」

Tillfur scratched her head while she was trying to object somehow, it was then,

「Thank you very much for worrying about us.」

Lux quietly put his hand forward and stopped Tillfur from speaking further.

And then he looked straight at the eyes of Saniya who was frowning and told her.

「But, I'll be fine.」

Saying that, Lux showed a calm smile.

Those eyes and smile that at a glance looked gentle, but gave an impression of unknown depth somewhere in it, caused Saniya's expression to cramp slightly.

「Hm, hmph. Are you still thinking that you will manage somehow? How optimistic. However, the girls who are fighting for your sake are—」

「No, it's not like they are fighting because I'm asking them to. And I am also in

no way making them dance on the palm of my hands with my words. They are participating in the battle this time for me of their own will.」

「.....」

Lux's calm—but unhesitating tone caused Saniya to shut up for a moment.

「Everyone isn't as thoughtless as you are saying in joining this battle. I believe that this is the chance that they are giving to me. That's why—I absolutely cannot do something like abstaining.」

「-.....!?!」

Lux declared that with a gentle attitude until the end. Saniya faltered.

And then, after a few seconds,

「Do, do as you like. Someone like you won't really get it unless you experience it yourself with your body—」

Saniya spat out those words that were mixed with sarcasm and left.

「Fuu.....」

When she vanished from sight, Lux let out a small sigh.

He wasn't shaken or anything by the provocation just now, but as expected he wasn't good in this kind of exchange.

It reminded him a bit of that period, when he was in the imperial court of the Old Empire.

「Uwaaai!」

「Wah!?!」

While Lux was pondering, the next moment Tillfur beside him leaped on Lux's shoulder.

「Oh maaan, you really said a good thing there Lux-chi. As expected from the former prince! I'm really moved!」

She slapped Lux's shoulder *pon pon* with a carefree smile while showing a happy expression.

「N, not really, it's not something that amaz—」

「.....」

When Lux was panicked that her face came near, he was jerked by Philuffy's wordless pull.

「Then, I'll cheer for you with everyone from the spectator seat, so do your best!」

Tillfur let go of Lux at the same time with that bright voice.

At the same time, Philuffy quietly brought her face closer to Lux.

「Eh.....? Wa, wait Phi-chan!?!」

At a close distance where it felt like he was going to be kissed, Philuffy slowly reached her hands to Lux's face and head.

And then, she moved her hands lightly as though patting his head and smiled slightly.

「Wha, what's the matter?」

「You have, bed hair.」

Philuffy apathetically told him that with her usual absentminded expression.

When Lux started walking while on the inside his heart was beating fast, Philuffy showed him a smile once more.

「Do your best, Lu-chan.」

「.....Right.」

Receiving his childhood friend's encouragement, Lux parted with the two and entered the practice ground's passage.

He passed through the narrow path and came down to the fighting ring.

「Well then, today's individual battle, seventh match, the fight of Lux Arcadia versus Saniya Lemiste, will be held from now!」

It was a wide space with spread out soil surrounded by a circle shaped stone wall.

For the spectators, this might be a battle that attracted large attention,

because almost all the students from all years and the staff were gathering.

Especially the third year students. Perhaps they heard the rumor and wished to ascertain Lux's true strength, because they were gathering with their faces looking strangely quiet.

(Somehow, it's nostalgic.)

The last time he had attention from students of the whole school showered on him like this was when he fought Lisha the first time.

But, it was different with that time when he was gradually ending up having to fight. Right now he was standing here by his own will.

「In the end it turned out like this.Well fine, I'll teach you your place.」

Saniya Lemiste smiled fearlessly and pulled out her Sword Device.

「.....」

Right after that, Lux also pulled out his sword in response and muttered the Passcode for the summoning.

「Come, the winged dragon of crest, the symbol of power. Obey my sword and soar, Wyvern!」

Right after that, light particles converged at high speed and blue Drag-Rides with streamlined shape were summoned behind the two.

「Connect – On!」

And then, the dragon that spread out into countless parts enveloped the two who were wearing pilot suits, and two Drag-Knights clad in armor appeared.

The movement of the two until now was exactly the same.

But, while they were clad in similar general purpose flying Drag-Rides, Wyverns, and confronted each other like mirror images, their appearances were slightly different from each other.

Lux's Wyvern had thick barrier generation devices and armor, specialized for defense. Its hand was holding a large Blade.

In contrast Saniya's Wyvern instead had reduced armor to turn it light weight, a type that was specialized for offense.

That armor had main armaments of two Breath Guns, medium Cannon, medium Blade, Wire Tail, and so on. It couldn't fire a powerful attack, but the armaments were for the sake of not giving the opponent the deciding factor and constantly continued to attack using numbers.

Lux had heard from Airi and the girls of the Triad that she was specialized in Hit & Run tactics.

For her to be a member of Syvalles despite not having a specialized fighting style meant that was just how high her comprehensive strength was.

「I don't have particularly powerful attacks but—for you, that's the most troubling thing isn't it?」

That she wouldn't come at him with powerful attacks, meant that her energy consumption would be little in comparison.

If they fought until time ran out, the decision would favor Saniya who unleashed more attacks.

Lux was taking a deep breath while understanding the meaning of Saniya's words.

And then wordlessly, he took his usual stance with the large sword aiming at the eye. (TN: Normal kendo stance, you hold the sword with two hands. Hold it in front of your body at waist level, with the tip of the sword directed to your opponent's eye. The stance is called 'seigan'.)

At a glance, it didn't look different at all with the fighting style that Lux showed until now using Wyvern.

「Looks like you cannot even reply back. —Then, how about we start?」

Saniya spoke with a fed up look towards the lack of reaction. Right after that,

「Battle – Start!」

The battle began with the instructor's signal.

「I'll end your pointless resistance here.」

Saniya flew backward with her Wyvern at the same time with the start of the battle. At the same time she laid out a barrage with her Breath Gun.

Lux also flew to the sky and swung his Blade, deflecting the attack.

Until this point it was a typical battle between fellow Drag-Rides, but Saniya's cheeks loosened seeing that Lux's fighting style was defensive as usual.

「Even though you said cool things like that, in the end you can do nothing but protecting yourself. You can do your best running around until the time's up.」

「.....」

Saniya drew out a medium sized Blade and transmitted energy from her Force Core into it.

And then, with a sharp movement that took advantage of an instant of opening, she slipped into Lux's bosom in one breath.

「—Now, show me how you endure this.」

She swung down her Blade diagonally with slight feint mixed in it. The moment Lux immediately tried to block that using his great sword—.

- Kiin!*

High pitched metallic sound rang inside the practice ground.

「Eh.....!?」

The dumbfounded voice spilled out from the mouth of Saniya who was slashing.

It was broken.

The medium sized Blade that had energy transmitted into it snapped cleanly from the center, small fragments danced in the air and fell.

「.....Wha-!? What is—!?」

A second later, Saniya who returned to her sense hurriedly leaped back from that spot.

But, Lux didn't do anything.

He readied his great sword like usual and took a defensive stance with no opening.

And yet, Saniya didn't understand why it was her sword that broke when it was her who should be the one attacking.

It seemed the surroundings were also in the same state, shocked commotion could be heard from the spectator seat.

「Ku.....! Yo, you, what in the world did—!?!」

「.....」

Lux didn't answer even when he was asked.

He was merely ascertaining the movement of his opponent Saniya with the same calm expression like before.

「H, hmph! Well fine! I don't know what you did, but if it's with this-!?!」

She yelled while at the same time she took stance with two Breath Guns simultaneously.

Consecutive shots from middle range.

With that she would be able to continue attacking one-sidedly, there wouldn't even be a one in million chance of her weapon getting destroyed.

The moment Saniya's finger pressed on the trigger at a range where her shot's power wouldn't decline, Lux moved.

「-.....!?!」

The movement of her finger didn't stop.

Under the condition where the 'shooting' was already decided, it was unexpected that Lux would be the one who approached.

But even so she didn't flinch and strongly pulled the trigger of both guns. Right at that moment, *bon!* the Breath Gun's gun barrel flew off.

「Eh.....?」

Saniya raised such voice for a moment in stupefaction.

Even so, perhaps her experience as a Syvalles member won out, because she

immediately aimed the other Breath Gun towards Lux and fired from very close range. But, completely similar to before, the part from the muzzle until the gun barrel was smashed up. Saniya retreated from that spot in panic.

「Wha, what's that.....!? What is, happening.....!？」

「.....」

Lux didn't pursue. He just swung his Blade as though nothing had happened and took his stance.

However, Saniya sensed some kind of strong discomfort and she opened her eyes widely.

The surface of the great sword Lux held had small lights shining like the luster of scale.

「Tha, that light— don't tell me!？」

When she noticed that, Saniya's eyes turned round in shock.

Part 2

The spectator seats of the practice ground watching over the battle of the two were greatly stirred.

「Wha, what is that? Why is Saniya-senpai's weapon smashed just from defending—」

「Err, I don't understand but, the weapons are more or less destroyed, so in this situation Lux-kun is at an advantage, isn't it?」

「Wha, whatever it is, Lux-kun do your best—!」

Bewilderment towards the baffling phenomenon and voices that rooted for Lux's superiority could be heard from the spectator seats.

In contrast, the third year students were staring at that sight with dumbfounded expressions.

「—Fuh. As expected, it seems that no one understands what is going on huh.」

At the halfway up of the spectator seats that were created in steps, familiar members were gathering on the seats with good view.

Lisha and Krulcifer came to watch after they finished their examination in the medical office regardless of the order for them to rest. Aside from them there were Airi and the Triad's members.

「.....What in the world could that be?」

When Airi asked with a vaguely discomposed look, Lisha smiled lightly.

「Fufu, do you want to know? That is the secret weapon that I invented. Actually you see—」

「To speak the principle, it's simply a counter attack, by matching the opponent's attack.」

「Wait, oi! Krulcifer!? Don't expose it early!」

Lisha snapped at Krulcifer who nonchalantly said that from the side.

But, ignoring that, Tillfur lifted her face.

「Counter, you say? But, isn't it strange? It only looks like that Lux-chi is simply defending the attack though—?」

Lisha reacted to that question and answered it immediately.

「Well, it's like that. Though this time, Lux is using a special weapon and defense method. If I have to explain it simply, the large Blade Lux is using this time is forming a force field on its edge like a Drag-Ride's barrier. In other words it has the power to repel back the enemy's attack.」

「Yes. If it's something like that, even I can understand. But, why did Saniya-senpai's weapons get destroyed? Was it simply because her attacks were repelled.....?」

This time it was Krulcifer who turned her head to Noct's question.

「Yes, exactly. However, by focusing that attack's strength to the edge part and the tip, the power is heightened. It's something obvious, but even attacking is accompanied by danger. If our wrist is aimed at and a blade is put on the path while we are swinging down a sword—what will happen?」

「That's—」

Noct reflexively gulped.

So to speak it would be like someone's punch was blocked with the tip of the blade.

The opponent would stay unmoved while the attacker would be destroyed by their own strength.

「By using the strengthened barrier that is generated from the Blade, the point from where the enemy's attack is sprung forth will be forced back as it is, destroying it in return. In case the opponent is using a gun, the sword tip will

push on the gun muzzle and make it burst.」

「——」

Airi and the others were speechless hearing the content of the explanation.

Because that technique wasn't as simple as it sound.

Different from defense that originally was only repelling or parrying attack, this tactic was accompanied by various dangers.

This technique would need the user to see through the enemy's attack accurately and aimed at the weak spot with unusual precision and speed.

If even a single motion got out of order, it would be the user themselves that got done in instead.

Destroying a weapon's weak point by blocking it, if an example had to be made it was a feat that was like striking the flat side of a sword using a hammer for smithing and snapping the sword.

That in itself could be possibly done by anyone if they had a certain degree of ability, but in the end that was only the case if the sword was put on a stand and fixed in place so it wouldn't shift.

Doing such an act towards a sword that was being swung towards oneself should be impossible by all rights.

It was a tactic that was possible only for Lux who could see through an opponent's attack preparatory movement perfectly and then predicted it.

This special move exclusive for Wyvern that was named as 『Critical Hit』, was completed at the intensive training last night.

「Bu, but, that sword that laid out barrier like a shield, could it be, Lisha-sama was the one who made it?」

「Yeah, after Lux formally enrolled, I was thinking about various things. I managed to make a prototype but, this is the first time it's thrown into a real battle.」

「Yo, you went as far as making a new weapon!? It's original!? Such thing, I still haven't heard anything like that even in another country——」

「I was only making the transmission of barrier to reach until the edge part of the great sword too. It's not at the level of me making it myself. Well, even just doing that much caused me to feel frazzled every day though.....」

Lisha rubbed her eyes sleepily, 'fuaa', and she yawned.

It seemed that Lisha was completely worn out from improving the Blade night after night added with the mock battle yesterday.

「.....So far as it goes, I'm also thinking of various things as the princess of the new kingdom you know? By using that, then even in a situation where Lux can only use Wyvern he will still be able to have enough destructive power. Just by intercepting attacks, if it's an Abyss of middle level, that technique will be able to pulverize it just like that. In other words with this the chance Lux will be able to show his real strength in Syvalles too will increase properly.」

The chance for Lux to use Bahamut was limited in order for him to hide his real identity and also because of the fierce energy consumption rate.

Thus Lisha thought of a plan so that Lux could fight even while still wearing Wyvern. She moved into action and brought it into reality.

「Well, it can also be said that more than half of it is relying on his technique, but I'll honestly say that I respect your achievement.」

「.....I don't feel that it's a praise at the slightest though. Is it fine to take it as a sore loser's talk? Hey Krulcifer.」

Krulcifer who coolly spoke and Lisha whose eyebrows and the corner of her mouth twitched hearing that.

「Both of you, it's nice and all that the two of you are getting along competing for Nii-san, but it looks like it will be over already you know?」

When Airi muttered that with a reproachful gaze, loud cheers suddenly rose from the spectator seats.

While a small battle was also being held over here, the match of the campus selection battle was decided.

Part 3

「Kuh.....!? E, enough already..... Let's end this.」

The seven types—a total that reached twenty one weapons she possessed were all destroyed. Saniya finally hung her head down and proclaimed her surrender.

She landed on the ring, sheathed her Sword Device, and raised both her hands.

「Due to the opponent's surrender, it's Lux Arcadia's victory!」

Instantly, the first and second year students raised loud cheers from the spectator seats.

At the same time, because of the defeat of Saniya who was a third year student and a member of Syvalles, turmoil ran through the seats where the third year students were located.

「.....This time, I'll recognize that it's my loss. But, don't think that you can win against Celis-neesama with just this level.」

Saniya spat out with an unpleasant expression, dispelled her armor, and left from the practice ground.

「Fuu.....」

Lux saw her off before he let out a relieved sigh.

Thanks to the Scale BladeBarrier Fang Sword that Lisha created for him, he managed to win somehow, but as expected <Critical Hit> that blocked the opponent's attack and destroyed the weapon used up more concentration than he imagined.

Even so it should be fine for him to feel satisfied at the point where he obtained victory but,

(.....But, why is it. That way of fighting of Saniya-senpai. Something feels out of place—)

「Oooooi! Lux! You did great there!」

Lisha's voice that flew from the spectator seats caused Lux to wave his hand awkwardly, it was then,

「—!?」

He felt an intense presence on his back. Lux reflexively turned around to behind him.

「.....」

Celis was at the center of the spectator seats that were mainly filled with the third year students.

She stood up on that spot. The aloof presence that her body was always enveloped with strengthened further and she was directing a sharp gaze that stabbed at Lux.

Seeing that figure that was filled with uncommon emotion, for a moment Lux was about to be shaken, but he immediately recovered his calm and gazed back at Celis.

「.....」

Their gazes crossed each other for a mere few seconds.

After that, Celis turned around and turned her back towards Lux.

Part 4

「Ce, Celis-sama. Whe, where are you—!？」

At the spectator seats that were right on the opposite side of Lisha and co., the classmates who were supporting Celis were surprised seeing Celis stand up from her seat and walk away. They hurriedly tried to make her stay.

「I'm going back. I already understand his true strength. I'll go check on Saniya, after that I will rest in my room.」

Her indifferent tone made her followers show bewildered faces.

「You won't watch the rest of the matches? That Lux Arcadia.....it seems that today he still has several matches left—」

「There is no need. He already showed enough to me.」

「Eh.....?」

Celis slowly inhaled and answered the puzzled third year girl.

「For him to bring the match into his victory by decision, it's advantageous enough for him to destroy Saniya's weapons only once. That he used that technique many times is for the sake of showing his cards to me intentionally.」

「Does he mean to say, that he still has composure left? Doing such a thing while Celis-sama will be his opponent—」

The follower girl asked in confusion.

But, Celis shook her head without the slightest change in her expression.

「That's not it.」

Celis informed so with a calm tone and then she turned her back to her classmates.

「That is a war declaration to me. But—I won't lose.」

She only left those words behind and then left the spectator seats.

「As I thought, you are different than most males that I've seen, Lux Arcadia.」

Her last voice wasn't heard by anyone other than Celis herself.

Part 5

And then, after the mock battle between Lux and Saniya, a few hours later.

The selection battle of the second day with individual battles as the main part was over, and the night arrived.

After that, Lux used Critical Hit to win two more battles against Syvalles and obtained victory marks.

Perhaps thanks to watching him, the faction that supported Lux, the girl students of the first and second year who were in an inferior position fought hard, and while the third year's side was still in a superior position, the situation now was one where it was unknown where the victory would go to.

The contest against Celis in the campus selection battle where two conditions were put at stake.

At the current time there was no problem regarding the subject.

Rather, it was even going well, but Lux had a problem that was unrelated with that.

「A, and so, about the matter tomorrow though—」

「Yes. Lux-san is really shouldering a fate of getting dragged into various troubles aren't you?」

In response to Lux who broached the topic like that, the black haired quiet girl—Noct of the Triad said that with an earnest tone.

「Why is Nii-san coming to rely on me only for something like this that I don't want to give advice about.」

And then beside Noct, his little sister Airi was also sighing in exasperation.

They were in a room of the girl's dormitory, the shared room of Airi and Noct.

Lisha made a suggestion to hold a party to celebrate the victory, but it was

rejected. The reason was because other than Lux wanting her to rest slowly, he himself also had a circumstance.

Furthermore, it was a special problem to which he needed to find a way to resolve it urgently.

「Something like promising a date with that Celis-senpai during the rest day tomorrow, just what in the world is Nii-san thinking?」

「.....」

He was unable to respond right away if she told him that.

Something called a rest day existed in the campus selection battle.

In order to prevent accumulation of fatigue from consecutive battles, the middle day of the five day period would be used wholly for rest, during that time the students would be excluded from emergencies and forbidden to use Drag-Rides.

However, he recalled that on that day he made a promise with Celis.

「Is Nii-san feeling like raping all the girls in this academy? As I thought, perhaps it's better to chase away Nii-san from this academy temporarily.」

「Uwah, that's cruel-!? That's, certainly it's my fault for making that promise, but it was Celis-senpai who started it, in that situation—」

When Lux was dithering up like that,

「Yes. Lux-san is altogether weak against pressure from girls, so I believe his hardship will continue as long as that problem isn't conquered.Though I really cannot imagine, Lux-san getting skilled at handling females.」

「It's mostly just as you said but, it really hurt so stop it okay!?」

Noct's indifferent verbal attack caused Lux to beg for forgiveness in panic.

「Well, though Airi in her own way will become lonely if Lux-san is really gone.」

「Wha-.....!?」

Airi's cheeks instantly blushed hearing those words that Noct said in continuation.

「Ple, please don't say such a joke! I, it makes it sound like I'm unable to get separated from my brother—. After all it's me who is giving counsel to Nii-san here!」

Airi objected with an unusually childish tone.

It was a rare reaction from Airi these days.

「Yes. However, if Lux-san didn't come for advice, it also feels like Airi will become sulky in that case, but I won't mention that for the time being. And so, more importantly—」

Noct gave a sharp retort while turning a glance at Lux.

She was surely meaning to return to the main problem that was his promise of a date with Celis.

「In the first place, that talk about a date, it was offered to Lux-san's cute cross dressing figure—to 'Luno'.....-san, the fictitious girl, isn't that right?」

「Eh.....!? Well, that's—」

Lux nodded with a complicated look at what Noct pointed out.

He recalled how the other day, he was tricked by Saniya and massaged Celis. On that occasion, after that in order to escape that predicament, he dressed himself as a girl.

「Then, isn't it fine to ignore such a promise? That 'Luno'-san doesn't exist in this academy anyway—」

Airi's blunt words caused Lux to return to his senses in surprise.

「Tha, that's no good you know!? Doing that means standing up Celis-senpai when I already promised—」

When Lux said that in a panic, Airi turned a somewhat accusing look at him.

「Nii-san is overly desperate. Isn't Nii-san in an antagonistic relationship with Celis-senpai? Currently she is intending to chase Nii-san out from the Academy you know?」

「This and that are different stories. At first it was just a mere misunderstanding, but the second time I was really tricking her, on top of that,

neglecting someone who is waiting even though I've already made a promise is—」

「Then, how about we honestly confess the truth? Tell her that 'Luno'-san, is actually Nii-san. Though doing that would cause a disaster for sure before the mock battle the day after tomorrow?」

「.....」

What Airi said was correct.

A girl who had received the good grace of another girl who was famous for being a man-hater, but that girl was actually a man—in addition that, it was a man who was currently on an opposing side. Shedding light to Lux's true identity here was too problematic in various meaning.

(Besides, I even massaged Celis-senpai while she was unknowing—)

Suddenly Lux recalled the sensation of skin his hands had touched and blood rose to his head.

Regarding Celis, until now he had only heard about her fame in regard to her strength, but in reality her beauty was also really something.

In addition, she also possessed a vivacious body while having the sensual seductiveness of an adult too.

(A, as I thought it's no good! If I come out honestly after doing such a thing—it will absolutely turn into a disaster!) At the very least Lux couldn't go meet her and expose his true identity while this campus selection battle was still going on.

While Lux was thinking like that and unfolded a deep discord inside him, 「Yes. It can't be helped then. For the kind Lux-san, it's too harsh to stand up Celis-senpai when he had already promised, for now let's use our last resort.」

Noct said that with a calm tone.

Normally, she had a silent personality without much self-assertion, but accordingly she was able to react with calmness. She was a reliable girl.

「Last resort, is it?」

When Airi tilted her head, Noct calmly nodded.

Lux was waiting for her answer with anticipation.

「Yes. In short, it's fine if 'Luno'-san goes to the date. That means—」

「I see, so there is that way.」

Airi clapped her hands in admiration.

「Aah, I see. If I cross dress again—.Wait!? How did it turn out like that-!? In the first place that's not a last resort or anything at all!」

Lux was about to nod in agreement for a moment, but midway he retorted with everything he had.

But, with a composed face Airi,

「What are you saying now. This is the best plan you know, Nii-san. No—is it better to call you Nee-san for a while?」

「I'm begging you, stop that!」

Lux spoke relatively desperately.

「Yes. But of all conceivable plans, I think this is the best method that won't hurt anyone.」

「No, I'll get hurt with this plan!? My heart will be really pained, I'm telling you!」

「But, what will we do about the essential woman clothing? If I remember correctly, I heard that set had been returned to the headmaster—」

Airi whispered while ignoring Lux's yell. It was then Noct brought the bag that was placed in the corner of the room and took out its content.

「Yes. I thought of that, so just now I borrowed a set of cross dressing outfits from the headmaster beforehand, so please rest assured.」

「Wait!? What's with that excellent preparation!? You were planning to dress me as aa woman right from the beginning right!?」

「Nii-san, please be a little quiet. It is already night you know?」

「.....A, sorry. No but, I'm begging you wait—!」

Even that pleading of Lux ended up in vain and the two completely progressed the talk in that direction.

In the end, Lux would go to the date with Celis tomorrow as a girl named 'Luno'.

Though as expected, he refused the demand that wished him to change into the woman outfit right there in order to check it.

「Be that as it may, if Nii-san is going through the trouble to meet Celis-senpai as another person already, then how about probing her too while you are at it?」

When Lux was going to sleep already for today with a bag of cross dressing set in his hand, Airi's voice that said such thing entered his ears.

「Eh—?」

Airi talked with a composed face towards Lux's question.

「I think there will be a chance to ask her during the date you know? The reason why Celis-senpai became a man-hater, if Nii-san gets lucky and is able to learn it, it might be useful—」

「.....」

Lux immediately understood Airi's thinking.

Celis's hatred of men. If he was able to know about the cause, then perhaps the matter of Lux's expulsion could be resolved with a way other than the campus selection battle.

But—

「.....That's, a bit impossible for me.」

Lux asserted clearly.

Even though he was already tricking Celis with a disguise, adding it with trying to pull out a girl's true feelings by making use of it was just too wicked as expected.

He lied the first time because of a misunderstanding, and the second time was because it couldn't be helped, but doing what Airi suggested would

become something with no justification.

「I thought that if it's the softhearted Nii-san, you will say that.」

Perhaps Airi too had also predicted that response from Lux, she merely smiled.

Of course, she surely said that because she was thinking of Lux's sake, but he couldn't yield on that point.

「But, please be careful okay?」

「Yep. I know, I'll do my best so I don't get found—」

「No, I heard from Noct that the outfit really suited Nii-san, so I'm not worried of that point but—」

Airi suddenly showed a serious face.

「It seems that the new kingdom has already dispatched scouting forces towards Heiburg, in order to monitor the Ragnarok that started to make fetal movements, and also to look for a method to defeat it while it's still petrified, if possible.」

「.....!?」

In order to subjugate the Ragnarok, it seemed the government office at the royal capital finally took the plunge.

That the new kingdom army was moving meant that there was a high possibility that before long the members of Syvalles would also be called.

「Also, it's unclear whether this is related or not but, it seems a few days ago a few dozen illegal immigrants were confirmed inside the new kingdom territory. I don't think it's related but.....the timing is suspicious.」

Surely Airi wanted to tell him not to let his guard down even on the resting day.

「Right, I get it.」

Lux replied shortly with understanding of everything and he stood up.

「Both of you, thank you for today. Then, rest well.」

Lux only said that and he moved to exit the shared room of the two, it was then, 「Ah, both of you, it's no good to follow us on the date tomorrow okay?」

「Eee.....」

When Lux said that jokingly, the two simultaneously sent him a fixed glare and raised dissatisfied voices.

「What's with that reaction!? Don't tell me you two planned to come!? That's absolutely no good! If you two came, then I won't talk with you two for a while!」

Lux gave a warning to Airi and Noct who showed expressions that was excessively disappointed before he left the room.

「Good grief.....」

He went to sleep for the day while feeling half exasperated.

Part 6

The next day. The day of outing with Celis that he promised as 'Luno' finally arrived.

Whether for good or for bad, the weather of the resting day of the campus selection battle was really clear without any cloud from the morning.

In order to heal the exhaustion from the mock battle, there were a lot of people who slept until afternoon.

The few human presences inside the Academy was something thankful for Lux who had finished changing into woman's clothes and waited for Celis but—

「.....Wait, I noticed just now but, just why is even the underwear a girl's underwear!?!」

For some reason it was mixed among the cross dressing set, so Lux wore it following the flow, but thinking really carefully, there was no reason for him to put that much effort.

(Even though it wouldn't turn out like this if I carefully checked the clothes when I received them—) While Lux was terribly regretting such thing,

「—Good morning, Luno.」

「Uwah.....!?!」

Lux almost jumped when a voice suddenly called out to him.

Celis in her uniform was beside Lux without him noticing.

Even in her usual uniform getup, she was gracefully beautiful.

「Is something, the matter?」

「N-, no, it's nothing. That's—good morning.」

「What a strange girl you are.」

Celis made a faint smile seeing the flustered Lux.

That smile that felt like a surprise attack caused Lux's heart to throb unconsciously.

(—Wait, just what am I thinking!? The reason that I came here today should only be for accompanying Celis-san right!?) In addition, he had to do his best not to ask about her secret.

He would accompany Celis as 'Luno' as promised just as she wished. Then after the campus selection battle was concluded, he would confess everything.

That was the compromise that Lux thought up.

「Then, let's go. Actually I wished to see you in your casual clothes, but this is still a resting day after all.」

Saying that, Celis took Lux's hand and started walking.

「Ah.....」

The warm and smooth sensation of that hand caused Lux's cheeks to redden.

An outing was permitted on the resting day, but going too far wasn't allowed. The outing was limited to only a part of the first block.

(I need to be careful so that the town's people won't notice.....) Lux made a meager prayer and the date with Celis began.

Even though she called it an outing, it seemed there was no particular objective that had been decided.

They went to look at merchandise like bags or clothes centered in the commercial district.

Their destination wasn't high class shops that were aimed at the rich, but normal shops. Even so, perhaps it should be said just as expected, Celis who was the strongest at the academy and came from the Four Great Nobles seemed to be famous. No matter which shop she went to everyone was surprised.

「Please act normally. Today I came here not as a duke's daughter, but as one

of the Academy's students.」

Celis said that to a shop assistant who interacted with her with excessive courteousness, but Lux thought that it would be impossible for them to treat her as normal customer because of their fear.

For Lux who had also done several odd jobs of serving customers during his five years of doing chores, he understood their feelings well.

Celis tried to present him with some kind of small accessory, but when Lux politely refused, they began walking on a street with stalls lining up next but—.

「.....」

(I, it's awkward somehow.....)

Perhaps because he was cross dressing, he couldn't even make too much movement. While Lux was feeling anxious, 「Is there somewhere you want to go to, Luno?」

Celis asked him with her usual aloof atmosphere.

「E, eerr—」

Honestly, Lux couldn't think of anything, so he showed a troubled face. It was then, 「I'm sorry. So it's just as I thought, I'm unable to become a proper escort.....」

- zun*, Celis's shoulders dropped and she whispered with a dejected expression.

「This is no good. Like this, I'm disqualified as a third year student. I will be scolded by Otou-samafather if I cannot even satisfy a single student who is my junior. I will be hated. As the eldest daughter of one of the Four Great Nobles, as the top student of the Academy, I.....」

Celis was feeling down with her beautiful face hanging down and her abundant blonde hair and breasts shaking.

It was really unexpected from her usual attitude that was dignified to an unusual degree.

「N, no-! There is no such thing! That's, IBoku—not. IWatashi myself am really

nervous..... I'm sorry, that I was unable to talk about anything.」

「.....Is that, true?」

After a bit of pause, Celis suddenly put on her serious face again and she asked him.

「Ye, yes! I'm, really happy, that I can walk with Celis-senpai like this.」

When Lux said that awkwardly with a smile,

「Eh.....!?」

Suddenly, the nice fragrance of smooth blonde hair softly tickled Lux's nose.

His face was wrapped in a warm and soft sensation.

The moment Lux realized that it was because he was hugged by Celis with his face buried between her largely protruding breasts, Lux's head boiled up.

「You are a kind girl, Luno. I'm happy.」

Saying that, Celis caressed Lux's head affectionately and continued her embrace.

「Wai-.....!?」

Lux was driven by an impulse that he had to get away immediately, but thinking that he could hurt her feeling by pushing her away, he hesitated.

Time passed for a while like that before Lux was finally liberated.

「I'm sorry. Was it painful?」

「N-, no-! I'm all right!」

He also got to feel various amazing things, so Lux yelled to hide it.

「The, then say—if there is no place senpai wants to go to, how about resting relaxedly in a place without people?」

「A place, without people? Regrettably, I don't know about that kind of place though—.Hah! Don't tell me this is, something special done when we are alone just the two of us.....!」

「No you are wrong! There is no deep meaning like that! IBoku—not, IWatashi and senpai are fellow girls after all.....」

Celis tilted her head while starting to have a strange conflict in her mind. Lux stopped her in panic seeing that.

「Is that so.....」

For some reason Celis looked somewhat down hearing that, but Lux didn't touch on that and he began walking ahead.

「Thi, this way, Celis-senpai.」

And then, Lux guided her to a place that he knew.

Part 7

Less than five minutes of walking from the commercial district.

Lux and Celis continued to walk through a narrow path at the tip of the city and arrived at a small park.

The surrounding was enclosed by short broadleaf trees with a verdant lawn spread out like a carpet. That place was like a small room that was made from plants.

There was also a small flower bed inside. The gentle sunlight shining in was illuminating the blooming flowers.

There were also things like a stone curb and sculptures at the side. It was a garden with a nostalgic atmosphere like the playground from one's childhood years.

「So there is this kind of place inside Cross Field.」

「Yes. I think it's a nice place for a change of feeling.」

Lux said that and gently urged Celis to sit down.

When they sat side by side on the lawn carpet, they mutually let out a small sigh.

「This was a place where a certain noble planned to build his villa. But, in the middle of the construction work, it was stopped because of the owner's circumstance.....this place is only the garden part from the construction that was half-finished.」

A villa's garden that was left alone in the middle of construction and after that no one appeared to continue the construction.

Right now the plot of land was also offered for sale, but perhaps because of its half-baked location, it seemed there wasn't any buyer yet.

This place that was created two years ago was arbitrarily named by Lux as 『Cross Field's Hideout』. He often rested here when he had a bit of free time.

「I like it. I made lunch, so let's eat together.」

「Tha, thank you very much.」

The sandwiches that Celis brought were shared and eaten between the two.

At first Lux was really nervous, but after finishing the relaxed lunch, the air became terribly calm.

「But, this is really a nice place.」

「Is that so?」

「Yes, somehow it's really calming. I'm feeling a bit sleepy.」

「Please sleep without reservation. Today is actually the resting day after all.」

After Lux said that, Celis straightened her back with a serious face and, 「Certainly that's true, but I cannot rest. After all, today too I'm having this outing under the pretext of guiding a new student through Cross Field.」

She said such strange thing.

「You mean—?」

「I have a mission. As the leader of the Academy's knight order, and as the eldest daughter of the Ralgris House, I have to become an example for all the students and show it with my actions. And so, although this is a resting day, I also cannot just brazenly rest.」

「Such thing—」

‘Is not true’. Lux almost said that but he shut his mouth.

Because he suddenly recalled a thought that was related to that.

「Is that also why—senpai is pretending that your injury from two days ago is alright?」

「.....」

Celis's expression changed into a shocked one for a moment hearing Lux's words.

But her face immediately returned to her usual aloof face of a senior.

Silence flowed for a while.

During the offense and defense against Lisha, she struck herself with the Lightning Lance at maximum output.

Even after the match was over, Celis's complexion didn't change in the slightest, but she should have received considerable damage from that act.

「Is that so. So even you, were watching.」

Celis muttered with a calm tone.

And then, she let out a sigh and showed a smile.

「I too am still immature, that a girl who is my junior can see through me.」

「That's not true.」

Lux denied Celis's self-depreciating words and he strongly said.

「No matter how strong, Celis-senpai is also a girl, so please rest your body properly. After all in this place, there are no students of our Academy.」

「.....」

For a while Celis stared at Lux with wide open eyes, but, 「I refuse. I still cannot relax my attention yet.」

She said that with a firm attitude till the end.

「Please don't force yourself. Talking to someone when you are feeling pained is—」

「That too cannot be permitted. If I, the captain of Syvalles, showed a weak-hearted side, the moral of the other students would decrease.」

After Celis clearly told that, she showed a smile that was filled with confidence.

「Listen to me, Luno. A strong person refers to a person who is able to withstand absolute solitude. That's why, I'm all right.」

「Celis, senpai.....」

Her resolve as someone from the Four Great Nobles, and furthermore as the

knight order's captain who obtained the title as the Academy's Strongest, caused Lux to feel his heart struck, it was then—

「No, please wait a little bit! Thinking carefully, senpai was completely unable to withstand the solitude! Didn't you talk to a stray cat so seriously, and in the end, that cat even ran away!?!」

Lux reflexively retorted like that when he recalled the scene when he first saw Celis. Celis's usual aloof atmosphere crumbled and she showed a flustered face.

「Yo, you still remember that!? Yo, you are wrong! I was only talking to myself that time. By no means was I feeling loneliness suddenly welling up inside me because I got stuck staying at the capital and being separated from everyone for a long while. It's nothing like that at all.」

「.....Wait, you are digging your own grave deeper and deeper though!? I'm not asking until that far you know!?!」

It was Lux who got flustered seeing Celis losing control.

「Besides, for some reason, at the capital I ended up scolding the males from the military and rebuked them harshly, it's depressing..... Even though, I only committed a bit of an error in controlling my strength, how did it end up like that I wonder.....」

「.....」

Seeing Celis hanging her head down dejectedly, Lux thought.

This person, was she actually just a lonely and awkward person.....he thought.

Lux was cheering up Celis who fell into depression for some time, while he was thinking of such a thing.

Part 8

A few hours later, after they finished resting in the 'hideout'.

Celis and Lux were walking on a main street in the first block.

The setting sun that was almost disappearing illuminated the townscape red, lengthening the shadows of the two.

「In the end, I fell asleep for a bit after that. I'm reflecting.」 (TN: Celis's way of talking throughout the series is overly polite. Even when she was flustered, angry, confused, etc., she never stopped using polite form of speech.) It was really hard to understand from her behavior, but it seemed Celis was feeling really down.

「No, it's completely fine. IBoku—IWatashi too fell asleep in the middle.」

Lux was consoling Celis while inside his heart he was flustered.

Actually Lux wasn't napping at all because it would be the end of the line if he was discovered to be a male.

His nerve was high strung in that kind of meaning, so he was quiet tired.

「Thanks to that my fatigue is mostly removed. It's thanks to you.」

Celis muttered that and showed a soft smile that she normally wouldn't show in the Academy.

「That's, will you—go out together with me like this again?」

「Uh.....!?」

Hearing the line that he feared the most being said to him caused Lux's heart to throb in surprise.

This time he accompanied her because he had promised before, but more than this would be bad.

There was no way he could continue tricking Celis forever, Lux too was at his limit.

At this rate—no, even about today, there was no way he could keep silent forever.

That was why, he did something like this.

「I'm sorry. I still cannot reply right now. But, when the campus selection battle this time is over—」

At that time, there would be nothing Lux could do except shedding light of his true identity.

Perhaps a different problem would occur once more, but there was no way he could deceive her for more than this.

「I understand. I will look forward to your reply.」

Lux heard Celis's words while feeling relieved inside his heart.

For a moment he was at his wits' end about this outing, but it looked like it would end safely. Lux sighed in relief.

It was then,

iiiiii!

A strange dissonant sound that split the ear could be heard from the surroundings.

「This sound, what could it be—?」

Celis only frowned a little, but Lux held his breath in sudden realization.

It was a sound that Lux had heard several times since he came to the Academy— the tone color of the horn flute that summoned the Abyss.

「This is— don't tell me!」

Lux who noticed that lifted his face, it was then that the shadow of an evil omen alighted down towards the central plaza a slight distance away.

「-.....!?!」

The expression of Celis who saw that tensed, and she quickly unsheathed her Sword Device.

「Luno. Please wait here. I will go look at the situation.」

「No, I Boku will go too!」

After Lux said that while forgetting to even use a girl's way of speaking, he followed the back of the running Celis.

The central plaza that was bustling with people who finished work was struck with terror and chaos.

「That's—!」

The true identity of that became clear at the same time as they arrived at the plaza.

Medium sized Abyss—Chimera.

A legendary monster with a lion's head, a goat's body, and then a tail with a poisonous snake's head at its tip.

The arrival of the Abyss was rare, but a Chimera itself wasn't a type that was that rare.

But, the Abyss should appear from Ruins and flew a long distance until here. It was baffling why it suddenly appeared here without any contact at all from the fortress and checkpoints between this place and the Ruins.

「Wha-!? Wh, why is an Abyss suddenly—!?!」

「Wha, what is going on.....!? Someone, call the guards quickly! No, call the military's Drag-Knights—」

The traders and shoppers who happened to be present trembled and raised stiff screams and ran away.

If an Abyss appeared in the middle of an urban area unexpectedly, anyone would be like that.

(This is bad! At this kind of time, what is in my hand is—)

He gave the Sword Device of his Wyvern into custody so that it would go through maintenance on the resting day.

His other Sword Device for Bahamut couldn't possibly be used here.

(But! If a victim appears because I'm waiting and seeing.....)

While Lux was hesitating like that with his hand reaching to the black sword, Celis was already moving.

「Eh.....!?」

- ton*, Celis kicked on the stone paving. A golden lightning dragon showed up behind her.

And then, it instantly transformed into the armor of Celis who was in a sprint.

She didn't use a Passcode to summon and wear the Drag-Ride. With only mind control operation, a high speed mobile deployment.

It was a high class skill that even five years ago when Lux was still in the Old Empire, there was no one who was able to master it properly.

Without a precise movement like going through the eye of a needle and excellent skill in mind control operation, the user would fail in connecting with the Drag-Ride and it would instead expose a fatal opening.

「Gii!?!GAAh!?!」

When the Chimera that was leaking out a flame breath from its mouth reacted to Celis's movement, the battle was already decided.

The special armament great lance, <Lightning Lance> bore into the Chimera's chest and its movement stopped.

- BASHliii!*

Then furthermore, intense electric shock burned the inside of the body and the Chimera was instantly burnt black.

When Celis pulled out her spear, the Chimera pitched forward motionlessly

and tumbled down with a thud.

「Amazing.....」

A voice of admiration leaked out unconsciously from Lux's mouth.

A Chimera was a medium sized Abyss, but its life force was strong and it possessed abundant methods of attack.

It was a type that was fairly dangerous for a Drag-Knight to fight solo.

Being able to slaughter it casually in the first attack made Lux feel Celis's strength for real once more.

「I defeated it. There is no sign of other enemies. Are you okay, Luno?」

Celis who pulled out her lance turned around to confirm Lux's safety, it was at that timing a huge black lump rose up behind her.

「Watch out-!」

「——」

Lux yelled, at the same time Celis's Lindwurm swiftly flew up.

The space where Celis was at just a moment before was burnt away by a spewed out hell fire.

「Kuh.....!?!」

Fanned by the flame before his eyes, Lux frowned from the high heat and offensive smell.

The wound on the Chimera's torso that should have been stabbed through was closing up, the skin that was burnt black peeled off, and a new skin was already created below it.

No—that wasn't all.

The sharp pair of eyes of the carnivore was dyed jet black. Its pupils were opening largely. Furthermore, its body surface had something like dark red blood vessels emerging. It couldn't be judged whether it was a strange pattern or arteries.

In the investigation record, a Chimera wasn't an Abyss with particularly

excellent regeneration ability.

And yet, to be able to resurrect from that state instantly, the reason for that was completely unknown.

「What is the meaning of this? —Why is, the chimera?」

Celis who escaped to the sky by flying whispered while preparing an attack using Lightning Lance.

As expected from a warrior who had fought a lot of the Abyss until now, she didn't show any signs of agitation. But, 「Gli, lleEA.....-!」

「.....-!？」

The Chimera madly howled and caught the lance that Celis thrust towards it. It gripped the lance then.

Right after that the flash of electric shock burst, but the Chimera didn't let go of the lance.

「SHAAaAAAAA-!」

Together with that bizarre cry, the snake tail that was like rope smoothly stretched several times longer.

And then, when it was moved like a whip, it drew an arc and assaulted Celis from her back.

「Celis-senpai-!」

「—!？」

It was an attack of using fangs that were tinged with purple poison liquid.

Lux sensed it and moved at the same time.

「Glih!？」

- zashu-!* Together with that slicing sound, half the body of the attacking snake twirled in the air.

The flash of the Sword Device that Lux swiftly pulled out, severed the tail of the Chimera.

「Now! The finishing blow—」

「Understood.」

- bachi-!* The next moment, fierce sparks of electrical discharge scattered around Lindwurm.

And then, an electric attack that was several levels stronger than before surged from the lance in her hand.

- BASHiiiiiii-!*

「GU, GI.....! aA.....!」

As expected it couldn't endure. The lance tip that was held back by the Chimera's front legs shot through and bore into the torso once more.

It seemed that this time the core was pierced accurately.

A clot of blood burst out, then cracks of light ran through its whole body.

「GI, iAAAAAA.....」

「.....-!？」

And then, when it radiated light along with a cry of death agony, it instantly burned out into a pitch black ash and crumbled down.

Lux instantly put up his guard thinking that it would self-destruct, but nothing happened and he stroked down his chest.

The monster that suddenly attacked the fort city was terminated and cheers arose from the central plaza.

「It looks like the Abyss is only this one.」

But, Celis's serious expression didn't vanish. She ran her gaze at the surroundings.

Lux also stayed vigilant at the surroundings, but he couldn't feel the presence of other Abysses.

(For the time being, it looks like there is no more in the area, but—) The Abyss appear from the Ruins and its surroundings.

That great principle should be unchanged even using the aforementioned horn flute.

When Lux first came to the Academy, he fought a Gargoyle at the practice ground. He thought it was some kind of exception, but there was also the possibility that someone was guiding the Abyss until the vicinity of Cross Field.

「More importantly, you helped me. Thank you Luno.」

Celis who dispelled her connection walked to Lux's side and her cheeks loosened abruptly.

「Ah.....!」

It was already too late when Lux spontaneously tried to hide it.

Celis was curiously staring at the black Sword Device Lux's hand was holding.

So that it wouldn't be exposed this time, he wrapped a cloth around the sheath to disguise it, but he never thought that he would end up pulling it out—.

「It's a really beautiful Sword Device. Don't tell me Luno, are you a user of a Divine Drag-Ride?」

Celis peered into Lux's eyes in a slightly excited state.

「N, no, it's something like a charm that I received from my big brother, so I too don't really know about the content.....」

「Is that so. It will be great if someday you will be able to use it.」

「Ye, yes.....!」

While on the inside his heart was beating fast, Lux replied like that with an awkward smile, it was then, 「Onee-chaaan! Thank you!」

Looking there, a young boy who was almost attacked by the Abyss was running their way to say thanks.

「Ah, wait a second! This person is—」

Lux worried about Celis's man-hating and he tried to stop the boy, then—

「You're really energetic. Are you hurt?」

Celis patted the boy's head with a gentle voice.

「Eh.....?」

Lux was surprised seeing that unexpected sight.

Certainly there was the possibility that because the boy was a child, he wasn't a target of her disgust, but he heard that she hated men since her childhood, and yet—.

After waving her hand to bid farewell to the boy, Celis turned to face Lux once more.

And then, after telling the circumstance to the guards who finally arrived, they returned to the academy.

「Luno? Is there something on my face?」

「No, that's..... Celis-senpai is all right with a boy if it's a child isn't it?」

「.....」

Lux said that casually, but for some reason Celis stiffened and fell silent.

And then she looked around. After confirming that there wasn't any sign of people in the area, she leaked out a small voice.

「Luno. Do you hate males?」

「Eh.....?」

Lux was at a lost of how to answer back the question that was suddenly directed to him.

It took some time for Lux to recall that the position of his current self was a noble girl.

「Even if that's the case, perhaps it can't be helped. Although this country has become the New Kingdom, but looking at the tendency of the past—of the Old Empire, then it's only natural.」

「N, no. It's not like I'm—such thing is」

Of course, Lux was a man, so obviously he replied like that by reflex, but Celis smiled seeing that.

「.....Say, can you promise not to tell anyone? Actually—I don't hate men or anything.」

「.....Eh!?!」

For a moment Lux didn't understand what he was told in bewilderment.

But, seeing Celis's impatient expression, he discerned that she wasn't joking.

「Rather, I have interest and admiration in males. Because, when I was a child, the teacher who I was indebted to was a kind and strong person. One day, I also want to have a fortuitous meeting with that kind of wonderful person—」

Celis tensed her self-deprecating smile and recovered her serious expression.

「Bu, but Celis-senpai is!? You are regularly taking stern attitude toward men or avoiding them—」

「A, about that you see..... This is also a secret but, I, I don't really understand how to interact with a young man. And so, since the past when I say 『I'm not good with men』 to the people in my surroundings, for some reason people said then that I hate men..... Why does it always turn out like that I wonder.....」

Her shoulders dropped and she hung her head down in dejection.

(Thi, this person, she is too awkward.....!)

But, it also felt like he understood how it turned out like that.

In a meeting with someone, a person's perception of the other party would be largely occupied by prior information.

Once Celis was perceived as a man hater, men who came into contact with her would be putting up a guard excessively and conversely they would abase themselves. That would worsen the misunderstanding even more.

「But, I'm still not permitted to direct good will towards a male. I also cannot rely or be spoiled by them. I am the eldest daughter of the Ralgris House, one of the Four Great Nobles. The captain of Syvalles. I have a really important position.」

「.....」

She was a girl with a position that was special even among nobles.

That was why she was taking a firm attitude in the current New Kingdom.

「Celis, senpai.....」

「Lux Arcadia.」

「.....-!？」

Lux's heart jumped in shock when his name was suddenly called.

(She, she found out? As expected—)

When Lux tried to apologize, Celis was staring forward beside him and smiled calmly.

「He is an interesting person. In his mock battle with Saniya, he deliberately showed his technique to me to challenge me to an equal match. —As I thought, he resembles that person in some respects.」

「.....That person? Who do you mean?」

After asking that, Lux recalled that he decided not to ask anything unnecessary before this, and yet...

But,

「Wade Rodbert-sensei. He was the educator of the Old Empire's royal family.」

「Eh.....!？」

Lux held his breath in surprise hearing that name.

Because that was the name of Lux's grandfather from his mother's side.

「Tha, that person, could he be—」

「Yes. He is the grandfather of Lux Arcadia. In the past, I received guidance in sword art and tactics from that person after he retired from being the instructor of the royal family.」

「.....」

Lux was dumbfounded in his heart.

He never imagined that he would have a tie with Celis in that kind of place.....

「I was really indebted to Wade-sensei. I still wasn't using a Drag-Ride at that time, but it won't be an exaggeration to say that it's thanks to sensei that I could obtain this much strength. But.....」

Celis's nostalgic tone was suddenly tinged with sorrow.

Wade who was Lux's grandfather made a counsel that criticized the misgovernment of the Old Empire and in the end he was imprisoned because of that. His life met its end inside the prison. With that as the impetus, Lux's mother and also Airi were banished from the imperial court.

Lux guessed that Celis's expression was because she was recalling such thing, but, 「I have to apologize to Lux Arcadia.」

「Eh.....?」

The unexpected sentence that was said from Celis's mouth caused Lux to spontaneously doubt his ear.

「Please don't say a word of this matter to other people. Because I'll say it properly to him myself. After the campus selection battle is ended, and I finished the subjugation duty that came to me——」

Celis slowly put her index finger in front of her lips and she smiled bitterly.

「.....」

(Apologize, to me? What could it be.....?)

Lux didn't understand anything.

He almost asked further forgetting his current appearance, but he was bothered by Celis's tormented expression and he stopped himself.

「But—I cannot lose.」

That smile vanished and Celis clenched her fist in front of her eyes.

「My judgment will affect many things. There are also girls who are still troubled even now from meeting painful experiences by men who inherited the ideology of the Old Empire. The matter of him is on my mind, but it's still too

premature for the Academy to accept him.」

「.....」

Even Lux couldn't deny Celis's thinking.

Certainly, that might be so.

The military and top brass of this country where the ideology of the Old Empire remained still had that thinking firmly rooted inside them even after the revolution.

(But, I—)

「That's right. I must never again make a mistake anymore.....」

「Eh.....?」

Lux lifted his head hearing that sad voice he suddenly heard.

「Luno. Today was really fun.」

Celis gently caressed Lux's head.

「Then, sayonara. I will be waiting for your reply.」

He parted with Celis after arriving in front of the academy's gate.

Lux avoided the eyes of other female students on the ground, took off his female clothing in the drawing room for guests, then he let out a small sigh.

「I absolutely, have to win huh.....」

After changing into the male uniform, Lux muttered.

He couldn't lose also for the sake of the girls who were supporting him until this far.

「And then, either way I have to reveal the truth to Celis-senpai and apologize—」

Lux renewed his determination, completed several small requests from the Academy, then returned to the girl's dormitory at night.

Part 9

「.....Eh?」

Inside the shared room that he thought had the light switched off already, a faint orange light could be seen.

「Welcome back, Lu-chan.」

「Ah, I'm back. That's curious. You are still awake, Phi-chan. Eh.....-!?」

Lux who thought that Philuffy was surely wearing her usual shirt saw her wearing a lacey black negligee.

No, in a sense this clothing should be the more proper one for sleeping, but the attire was so thin that her body line was clearly rising to the surface, it was clinging tightly on her body, so his eyes were horribly troubled of where to look.

Furthermore, she wasn't covered with a blanket like usual, she was in a state of standing up from the room's chair.

The bulging chest that asserted itself greatly, and the white skin that could be seen slightly across the transparent fabric. And then the absentminded expression that had traces of childishness remaining shined from the lamp's light, causing Lux's heart to beat fast.

「Wha, what's, wi, with that appearance!?」

He intended to pretend to be calm, but he raised a completely shaken voice instead.

「I received, this, from Onee-chan.」

「Wai-!? What is that person thinking!? Even though I'm in this room too, such thing—」

「Is it, strange?」

Philuffy let out a slightly disappointed voice still with a serious face.

Lux who saw that hurriedly shook his head and praised 「That's, it's cute」.

「I'm glad.」

Praised by Lux, Philuffy smiled just for a bit.

Coupled with that appearance, his childhood friend looked much cuter than usual.

「Bu, but, why are you waiting for me until this late?」

When Lux asked that, Philuffy still with a serious face, 「Lu-chan. Want to 'gyuuu', after so long?」

「Eh?」

「Because Lu-chan, recently you are a bit tired.」

Philuffy asked one more time with an unchanging serious look.

What could 'gyuuu' mean? Lux tilted his head in puzzlement for a while.

After thinking for a bit, he recalled the past, then he suddenly noticed with surprise and his face reddened.

In their childhood, Philuffy often did a certain act to Lux who felt down after losing his mother in an accident. Lux recalled what it actually was.

『You will feel cheered up if you have this done to you, that's what my Okaa-sanmother told me when she did it for me—』

At that time, Lux said his thanks to Philuffy's feeling, which also seemed to make Philuffy pleased. After that, every time she saw Lux wasn't lively, she would try to give him a hug.

「Yo, you don't need to do that you know!? In the past it's....., I was really happy though. But at our age, as expected that's a bit bad!」



Or rather, if the grown up Philuffy did such a thing to him, he who was a male in puberty didn't have the confidence that he would be able to keep hold of his reasoning.

Honestly speaking, even her sleep-wear appearance today was dangerous.

「You don't want?」

「I, it's not that I don't want, that's.....if the current us does that then it would be dangerous morally or something—」

「.....」

When Lux became desperate and said that,

- puih*.

Philuffy suddenly averted her face aside still with a serious face.

「Eh.....? Phi-chan?」

「.....I'm hurt.」

Even inside the expressionless look, a relatively sad nuance was inserted there while Philuffy said that.

「Lu-chan. You, don't like me.....」

(No, no good! This pattern is.....!)

The case where Philuffy was angry and didn't talk to him was still better.

A case where she was acting snubbed like this rarely happened, but the time needed until her mood was fixed would also become that long.

「I, I get it! The, then just for a bit.....can I ask you to do that?」

「.....Nn. Okay.」

The moment Lux folded, Philuffy suddenly smiled and her body came in front of him.

And then Philuffy hugged *gyuuu*- Lux's body tightly right from the front.

「-.....!?」

The sensation of touching her white and smooth skin, and the sensation of

her abundant breasts were softly pressed on him caused Lux's head to boil up.

The girl's body warmth and faint sweet fragrance sweetly paralyzed the inside of his head.

(A, as I thought, this is bad-.....! It feels too good, something like this—!) Like that a long few seconds passed before Philuffy slowly let go.

「.....You're, energetic now?」

「Ye, yep! Tha, thank you, Phi-chan.....」

Lux was unable to look straight at his childhood friend's face and he averted his gaze with blushing cheeks.

「Good night, Lu-chan.」

Philuffy smiled contently and then she fell asleep at the lower part of the bunk beds.

(I'm happy that she is trying to cheer me up but, because of the sensation just now, my body is hot.....!) Lux who became energetic became unable to sleep instead that night.

Part 10

「Celis-senpai, welcome back.」

「I'm back, Saniya.」

When Celis returned to the entrance of the girl's dormitory, the girl who idolized her like a big sister welcomed her.

「How cruel, geez. Leaving me alone like that.....」

「It's because you are going to make a ruckus when going out with me. I judged that you need to take a rest properly. I will permit you to accompany me next time.」

An established dialogue was exchanged between the two while they were walking through the girl's dormitory's corridor.

A cute classmate who worried and relied on her.

But, it was mysterious. For some reason, rather than this girl who she had associated with longer, the girl named Luno who she had only met recently occupied most of her thoughts.

(.....I too still have some ways to go.)

Celis thought that she had to control her emotions.

She had to make the best judgment and act accordingly.

If not, she would cause an error that she couldn't take back again.

「More importantly Saniya, are you all right? With the tussle this time, do you recall the past again or—」

Celis suddenly recalled something and asked that. In response, Saniya instantly held her breath looking taken aback.

「Thank you very much for the consideration. Celis-neesama. This time, you

negotiated for my sake in order to chase him out from the Academy.....」

She muttered that and smiled powerlessly.

「As I thought, I'm still scared of males. Because I was always, tormented by my father and brothers inside the Lemiste house—」

「I understand. It's not your fault, Saniya.」

Celis heard that the Lemiste House, the nobles of a remote region where Saniya originated from had seven siblings, and Saniya was the only girl among them.

It seemed that Saniya had received every kind of unfair treatment while the rule of the Old Empire was continuing until five years ago.

Therefore, in order to protect her and other girls who were fearful against men, Celis took the initiative to fight.

「Please rest assured. I won't lose.」

She renewed her determination and declared so.

「Thank you, Celis-neesama.」

「.....」

But, she wondered why.

Celis couldn't speak out loud, the hesitation inside herself.

Episode 5 – Weakest Versus Strongest

Part 1

The fourth day of the campus selection battle passed safely, and then today, the final day finally arrived.

「Good morning ladies and gentlemen. With today it's the last day of the campus selection battle. Pay attention so no serious injuries will result. Everyone, put forth every effort.」

Inside the classroom in the early morning, Instructor Raigree concluded the talk shortly like usual and ended the class.

The moment the instructor exited and the tension inside the classroom relaxed, Lisha stood on the podium in the front.

「My dear compatriots, you have done well fighting hard yesterday. The number of victories and defeats and the score until yesterday has been posted, but I will announce it here right and now once more!」

- ban* Lisha spread out a large poster and raised her voice loudly.

If a first or second year student won against a third year students, it would be three points per win.

If a third year student won against a first or a second year student, it would be two points for them.

Until present, with the pair battles and individual battles combined, a total of 127 battles were carried out. The point were 126 points for Lux's side, while Celis's side had 134 points, the difference was closer compared to yesterday.

「What's left is only to overturn the situation! Everyone, put your spirit into it!」

After Lisha gave that encouragement, 'WAAAH' cheers filled the inside of the classroom.

「I wonder why she became something like the leader.」

Krulcifer made her usual cool smile while saying that smoothly.

「At any rate, everything will be decided with the battle today! Oi, Aingram's airhead girl! You are confident right!?!」

「Yes. I'm fine.」

When Philuffy was called by Lisha, she nodded with her own usual pace, however there was no hesitation in it.

「Don't force yourself too much okay, Philuffy.」

Lux said that to the childhood friend sitting on the seat beside him.

In the battle between fellow Syvalles members, the direct confrontation against Celis became extremely important.

Thus it was a battle they couldn't afford to lose, but as expected, there was also a worrying aspect.

Of course, Philuffy was also a user of a Divine Drag-Ride, there was no doubt that inside the Academy—no, even inside the country she was one of the prominent powerful people.

But, even bearing that in mind, as expected Celis was strong to an unusual degree.

He didn't want Philuffy to act recklessly when it became a fierce close combat, which might cause her to get hurt or anything.

(Philuffy is really stubborn after all.....)

Normally she looked absentminded, so she was liable to get misunderstood, but since their childhood, she had the nature of not yielding what she had decided on at any expense.

Lux was happy that she was strongly showing such side for Lux, but on the

other hand he was also worried.

「Yep. I'll be fine.」

Philuffy showed a faint smile and replied immediately.

「Let's do our best. Lu-chan.」

She just replied like that, but Lux could only smile wryly to that.

(As I thought, she isn't planning to back down.....)

Philuffy was quite seriously planning to win the match.

However, Lux was also the one who was wishing for this battle.

In that case, his only choice was to put his best into it.

「Then, let's go soon?」

「.....Yes.」

Lux nodded to Philuffy's voice and they exited the classroom together.

After having a short briefing session for the campus selection battle in an empty classroom, they walked towards the practice grounds.

—

During that time, for some reason Lux spoke out a question that he wasn't even pondering.

「Hey, Phi-chan.」

「What, Lu-chan?」

The vacant eyes of the girl walking beside Lux reflected his face.

Asked back like that, even he himself felt doubt why he would ask something like that.

「It's, you see..... In the past, Phi-chan. Was there something? Like you were seriously sick, or injured, something like that—」

「..... I don't, remember anything like that.」

After Philuffy tilted her head and said that, Lux thought that as expected, it was just his imagination.

「I see, nope. It's nothing. Don't mind it.」

Lux said that and smiled wryly.

「But, I remember a bit.....five years ago.」

「.....Eh?」

「Lu-chan. You came, to save me you know?」

「.....」

Philuffy made a faint cheerful smile.

The smile of his childhood friend which normally would relieve him, for some reason caused Lux to feel a strange shudder.

(Five years, ago.....? If I remember right, the last time I parted with Philuffy.....) 「Uu.....!」

- Throb*, a sharp pain reverberated in Lux's head.

Some kind of baffling scene that looked like a dark underground room flickered at the back of his mind.

It was at that moment,

‘Waaah’, such cheers could be heard from the direction of the practice grounds.

「Let's go, Lu-chan.」

「Ye, yep..... Let's hurry, it's our turn.」

Lux and Philuffy ran and arrived at the practice ground.

Part 2

About a few hours before the battle against Celis began.

A large force of Drag-Knights was gathering at the sky in the vicinity of Lidneth seashore, a remote region of the Heiburg Republic.

Their affiliation was shown by the crest of the New Kingdom that was engraved on a part of their armor.

A man of High Class that was called as an elite in the present New Kingdom was looking down below with a trembling voice.

「It's still not moving..... Was something this big really alive in the past?」

The Ruin's biggest monster that was concealed by the Old Empire and secretly unleashed—Ragnarok Divine Beast of Demise.

The legendary class monster that was only known through record was being looked down by nearly three hundred male military officers with expressions that were tinged with tension.

That Abyss that boasted a gigantic body that could be mistaken as a small island looked as though it was fused with the surrounding rocky area. A face with a fiendish expression peeked out from the ocean.

Only Drag-Knights with Wyverns that could fly approached until over its head, but a mixed force of Wyrms and Drakes was standing by at the nearby pier and island.

A third of the Drag-Ride forces that was possessed by the current New Kingdom's military was invested into the mission this time. It wasn't just for investigation and monitoring, but also included the calculation of launching attacks at the same time.

When the time came, they would fight a battle against the resurrected Ragnarok. They would lure the enemy away from the townscape and the pier

while bringing the fight to an unpopulated island that had traps laid out on it. Even such possibility was considered.

But—

「Why? In the letter brought by the envoy from the Heiburg Republic the other day, it said that even now there is no sign of it starting to move.....」

The man who was the captain frowned towards the sight before him.

Just three days ago, they were requested 『We want to look at the situation』. Because of that, he was leading a large force like this and came here, but the monster before his eyes was like a gigantic statue. Just like its appearance suggested, it didn't show any signs of moving at all.

No, on the contrary—.

「Captain. What should we do? Even if we continue observing it like this, if it's not going to move immediately, it will be necessary to arrange logistics nearby—」

A Drag-Knight officer who served as vice captain gave that counsel.

「I guess..... It's also fine if we end this operation without anything happening like this, but I want a positive proof. For now—have several Wyverns approach to look at the situation, and then use Drakes to observe its internal state!」

After hesitating slightly, such decision was made.

Was it dead, or sleeping, or perhaps gathering strength?

In order to judge the battle situation, they would only keep getting scared against the threat without taking action.

『Ordering all hands! From here on several names from the Wyvern force will carry out an investigation. The main force is too keep vigilant. All members ready your Cannons! The target spot is the head part coming out from the sea surface. Begin bombardment if the enemy's movement is confirmed! The force at the pier and the force on the small island, don't let your guard down! Here we go!』

The captain readied his Cannon while communicating that using Dragon Voice to the whole army at the same time.

「.....」

The whole army held their breaths nervously. Then when several Drag-Knights flew away heading towards the Ragnarok—

.....*pishi-!*

Between the sounds of the waves, a strange sound of cracking could be heard.

Part 3

「Well then, the campus selection battle's mock battle of group A's first pair, versus group B's second pair will begin!」

The fifth match in the practice ground today was enveloped with intense enthusiasm and excitement.

Even the students of all years who had been fighting to the bitter end until this point understood that this battle would be a big turning point.

Thus, the practice ground was also filled to the brim with quiet tension.

「Forgive me, Lux-kun. Personally, I really wish to support you but—. With my position, this time I'll side with Celis.」

Perhaps because Saniya was defeated by Lux in the individual battle, today Celis's pair was Sharis of the Triad.

「I don't mind you know, Sharis. Because even if you become his ally, the result won't change at all.」

Celis muttered with her usual aloof expression.

It was similar to her usual aura that overwhelmed other people, but,

「On the outside she is an Ojou-samayoung lady that can only make this kind of face, but actually she also has a cute side. My bad, but I'll go all out. If it's you, well, it won't be any problem, right?」

「Thank you very much, Sharis-senpai.」

Lux returned a nod to Sharis's smile.

Surely Sharis was being considerate to Celis who had to shoulder the Academy's burden.

But, at the same time she also believed that Lux would be able to smash through this adversity.

That was why, Lux thought that he couldn't lose.

(I have to win, then expose my true identity to Celis-senpai and apologize. And then—have her allow me to accompany her in the Ragnarok's subjugation.)
「.....Please do as you like. I will just accomplish my duty.」

Celis said that as though she wasn't bothered at all.

It seemed that the petrified Ragnarok at the open sea that was about to be released had the momentum of its fetal movement strengthening in these few days. Judging from the observation result until now, it might be resurrected within a month—or perhaps it could be faster and resurrect within few days and then it would start moving.

Thus, there was no time.

In order to prevent Celis from exterminating the Ragnarok alone, and also to bring victory in the international tournament after that.

The battle that put the fate of this country at stake was already starting.

「Well then, unsheathe each of your Sword Devices and connect with your Drag-Rides.」

Following the instruction of Raigree who was the referee, the four wore their Drag-Rides.

「You have resolved yourself haven't you, Lux Arcadia.」

Celis wearing her Lindwurm quietly asked.

Even if her opponent was the general purpose Drag-Ride Wyvern, she intended to attack with all her strength.

Lux nodded in response and lightly took his usual stance with the large Blade that Lisha modified.

「I'm all right. Because I won't run.」

「.....」

His gaze crossed with the girl who was the Academy's strongest.

Just for an instant, the spectator seats fell silent like a calm lake surface, at that moment—

—

「Battle, Start!」

—

The battle began at the same time with Instructor Raigree's voice.

Lux booted up the propulsion device of the Wyvern and swiftly flew backward.

In order to perform the defense that destroyed the enemy's weapon—Critical Hit, he had to measure the attack timing of Celis.

Celis also similarly flew above, then while Sharis was readying her Breath Gun to lay out a barrage, it was only Philuffy in her Typhon who was showing an unexpected movement.

「Pile Anchor.」

She thrust her huge right arm and rust colored wire shot out from the upper arm.

- Doun-!*

The metal stakes that were fired out at fierce speeds like a bullet opened up vertically like a snake's jaw and assaulted Sharis's Wyvern.

「.....Kuh!? —Whoops, dangerous dangerous. Philuffy missy is scary huh, acting suddenly like that.」

Sharis escaped to the sky to dodge the preemptive strike that was fired almost horizontally and she sighed in relief.

By escaping to the air, although there was the difference in specs, it would make it hard for the land battle type Typhon to land its attacks. At the very least, she shouldn't get done in one-sidedly so soon.

「Ei」

But, Philuffy muttered right after that. In that moment, *meki meki* a strange sound of destruction could be heard in the practice ground.

「Wha-.....!?」

When Sharis noticed the true identity of that sound, not only her, even the students in the spectator seats were dumbfounded.

The tip of Typhon's armament, Pile Anchor bit off the wall surface behind Sharis and grasped a huge mass of rubble.

While the wire was pulled back with a speed that wasn't bothered by its weight, Typhon turned around in half rotation and aimed at the Lindwurm midair.

The wire that had a mass of rubble attached on its end was turned into a weapon like a giant flail, which was swung in an arc!

「.....!」

Lindwurm's Divine Raiment—Divine Gate was already spreading its space. Celis activated instant teleportation in a flash and evaded that attack.

But,

The surprise attack was dodged. The instant Lux made that judgment, the impact sound of a heavy metal burst out.

Right after that, Lindwurm that Celis wore was sent flying at high speed to behind Philuffy and crashed on the wall.

「Celis!」

「Philuffy!」

From the sky, Sharis and Lux called out to their respective partners.

After a gap of a few seconds, Lux comprehended the offense and defense between the two.

Celis teleported to behind Philuffy. At that moment, Typhon visited a powerful kick to the back.

It was a kicking technique of a Drag-Ride that couldn't be unleashed without possessing absolute sense of balance.

Furthermore, if the prediction that Celis was circling to her back was mistaken, the timing of the attack would be off.

A cloud of dust enveloped the surroundings of the wall surface Celis crashed

onto. A commotion wrapped the spectator seats.

(Philuffy..... She is really strong!)

He had understood just from watching her fight once previously, but this time her movement was even more terrifying.

She deliberately made the Pile Anchor's first attack to miss, made it bite off the wall surface at the back, created an improvised flail and gave a pursuing attack towards Celis. It was an amazing inventiveness.

And then, estimating that Celis would dodge and circle behind her at the same time, she visited a kick to the back that originally shouldn't be reachable by any attack.

While the true strength and ability of the serious Philuffy caused Lux to be at lost for words, 「—Lu-chan. Be careful. Right now, I cannot move.....」

「—!?!」

Philuffy raised a voice that was mixed with faint agony. Right after that, Lux quickly swung his Blade.

- Giin!*, sparks burst before his eyes and intense electricity ran through Wyvern.

「Guh.....!」

Even while grimacing from that pain that was transmitted to him through the Drag-Ride, Lux somehow pushed back the opponent's attack and took some distance.

Celis who teleported in front of Lux using Divine Gate unleashed an attack using Lightning Lance.

The muscles in his whole body were paralyzed from the powerful electric shock and the control system of Wyvern was also degrading.

Most likely Philuffy also got hit by this thunderbolt in the defense and offense just now.

Even if it ended up as simultaneous strikes to one another, if the special armament, the lance could hit, the opponent's movement could be sealed.

He had already anticipated it but, as expected it was a fairly troublesome ability.

Thinking normally, it was something at the level that nothing could be done about it.

「Honestly, it's just a little bit unexpected.」

Celis spoke with a serious face while floating still in the air.

Lux's Wyvern and Philuffy's Typhon were still under the effects of the electric shock, they couldn't move satisfactorily.

Thus, it was convenient for Celis to spare time for a conversation, but the words that they came to hear were unexpected.

「I was thinking that it would be fine to hold back a bit more than the match against those girls four days ago.」

「.....!？」

Even in the match four days ago, at the battle against Lisha and Krulcifer, Celis was fighting with composure to spare.



The corners of Celis's lips bent into an arc along with that declaration.

That smile of an absolute ruler.

Celis showed a face that she created as someone from the Four Great Nobles.

「Can I ask you to surrender first at this point?」

And then after a temporary pause, she said such thing to them.

「I don't want to get serious and cause needless injury for more than this.」

Those words weren't a threat, but her true feelings without any exaggeration.

Those words came exactly because she judged that she would be forced to get serious with her all with Lux and Philuffy as her opponents.

「Oi Celis, making pointless talk in the middle of a fight is—」

Sharis beside her gave a warning, but Celis didn't avert her eyes from Lux and Philuffy below.

「I have an obligation to protect this Academy.」

She pointed and thrust the tip of the lance before the two and then the strongest girl declared, 「By any chance you might be different, but in this country there are still men who are persecuting weak women. I have to fight as those girls' sword and shield.」

And then, Celis continued with a serious voice that was laced with faint tension.

「I will announce my judgment. I still cannot recognize an exception like you. There is no way I can ask for cooperation from a male. I will subjugate the Ragnarok alone. If you say that you cannot accept it, please continue to fight. I will teach you that I am able to do that.」

Her words were most likely genuine.

She was without a doubt a strong person, and it was also clear to see that she was really trying to protect the Academy and the students.

Perhaps it would be fine if he left it to Celis.

But—.

「I will remain in this Academy.」

Lux answered without showing any hesitation or discomposure.

Exactly because he knew Celis's true feelings that he couldn't possibly accept it.

Above all else, Lux also had the same feeling of wanting to protect everyone in this Academy.

「This isn't for the sake of anyone else, but for myself. That's why—I won't give up.」

After Lux proclaimed that with a strong gaze, Celis took a deep breath.

She turned a gaze that was slightly tinged with hesitation towards Lux and declared.

「—Then, here I come.」

Part 4

On the other side of the match that was reaching the climax—a shadow was moving secretly.

In the empty library that was closed up without even a librarian inside at the present time.

The one who was at the deepest passage lined up with bookshelves was the girl called Saniya Lemiste.

This girl who originally should be watching the fight of Celis, who she went so far as to idolize as an elder sister, told everyone around her that she would be resting inside her own room right now with the excuse of recuperating.

Her braided hair shook slightly while she was putting the key in her hand into the keyhole of the door in front of her. She then twisted.

- Click* Such sound resounded and the lock opened. Then Saniya chuckled.

「Fufu, it gave me a hard time but, with this, finally—」

「You will be able to search the off limits place—is that it? Saniya-senpai.」

「.....!?」

Saniya turned around towards the sudden voice. There three girls were standing.

Lux's little sister, Airi Arcadia. On both her sides were Tillfur and Noct of the Triad.

「.....What is your business? Aren't you going to watch your big brother's battle, Airi-chan?」

「Yes. Airi too greatly wanted to do that, but she came here because of your fault. Please take responsibility.」

「That's right. When Airi-chan is explaining Lux-chi's fight, her spirit is really different you seee.」

「.....Well, putting aside that kind of inconsequential thing.」

Airi straightened her back while her cheeks were reddening slightly.

And then, she cleared her throat *cough* and directed a serious gaze at Saniya.

「I want to know one thing. What are you looking for? Senior of Syvalles—. No, Heiburg Republic's spy-san.」

「.....」

Saniya's eyes turned round hearing those words that were said casually.

「Haa..... no matter how antagonistic I am to your big brother, but to call me a spy of another country is just—. I am really hated here. It hurt.」

「It seems that you enrolled into this Academy two years ago, as a daughter of a noble living in a remote region, but it appears that you are an adopted child in the Lemiste House isn't it? It was hard to obtain proof with just that and until now we didn't find out, but recently, you finally showed a large movement.」

「.....」

Saniya responded calmly. In response, Airi pushed out a bundle of slightly dirty papers.

They were letters addressed to Heiburg, written by Saniya with the internal conditions of the Academy.

「We already reported this to the headmaster and the government office too. If you don't want to say what you are scheming, then please receive interrogation slowly by all means in the prison of the royal capital.」

Airi calmly asserted and cast her eyes down.

Then, Saniya leaked out a small bitter smile and stood up.

「Are you planning, to capture me?」

「Yes. Please don't move from that spot. In any case, you don't have any more chances of victory.」

「Right right. We had already called everyone else in Syvalles before this too.」

Noct and Tillfur stood in front of Airi and pulled out their Sword Device altogether.

But, even after being told the fact that she along with the library had been surrounded, Saniya wasn't agitated at all.

「Hmph..... I'm impressed that you all can be a bit clever but—looks like you are miscalculating.」

Saniya made a fearless smile while untying her braided hair.

And then she narrowed her eyes slightly and emitted a fierce aura that was completely different from her usual intellectual impression.

Her long hair spread out roughly. Her eyes glinted sharply.

Saniya grinned while sending a ferocious hostility that gave the impression of a hungry carnivore.

「To show my respect to you three who saw through me, I'll teach you what I was planning. My mission is to massacre all of you. To destroy the combat force of the New Kingdom—right here!」

And then, Saniya pulled out her Sword Device.

「.....Come, the winged dragon of crest, the symbol of power. Obey my sword and soar, Wyvern.」

「-.....!?」

A moment later, Noct and Tillfur also summoned their respective Drag-Rides and wore armor on their bodies.

Saniya was emitting a terrible killing intent, but the Drag-Ride she was using was a general purpose Drag-Ride, Wyvern.

If the members of Syvalles came to reinforce the two, she wasn't an opponent that they couldn't beat.

When the three thought like that—

iiiiiii!.....!

—

「.....This sound is—!?!」

Suddenly, a dissonant sound could be heard from somewhere. Airi plugged her ears reflexively.

A flute's sound.

A sound that was teeming with an evil omen of destruction—from the horn flute that called the Abyss.

But, there was no Abyss that appeared in that place. In exchange Saniya's summoned Wyvern suddenly accomplished a bizarre transformation.

- Snap*, something like dark red blood vessels crawled on its surface, the armor creaked as though it was screaming, and the Force Core was tinged with an ominous radiance.

The Drag-Ride that should be made from inorganic substance was wriggling—like a living thing.

「What's, this.....? Is that really a Drag-Ride!?!」

「Unknown! What in the world, is—!?!」

Tillfur and Noct faltered. Behind them, Airi was backing away.

「Now! Let's end this idiotic selection battle and start a real war! You bunch of sheltered nobles!」

Saniya's eyes snapped widely open, and right after that the strange-looking frame activated.

Part 5

The wall and ground were gouged violently, clouds of dust and white smoke were hanging over the practice ground here and there.

In the practice ground that welcomed the decisive battle of Lux and Celis, a never seen before fierce battle was developing.

「Biting FlareDragon Bite Explosive Blaze」

The right arm of Typhon that Philuffy was wearing was tinged with light and shook the surrounding air.

It was Typhon's other special armament that sent energy directly into the caught object and blew it up.

That attack, which wouldn't let Celis get away unscathed if she was hit with it directly, caused explosions that looked like eruptions from the piece of the ground that Philuffy seized from the practice grounds.

Clouds of dust and soil rolled up from the explosion's impact, and at the same time Typhon's shoulders, arms, and back fired out countless Pile Anchors. Inside the smoke where one's sight was limited such that they should be unable to see even an inch ahead, Celis deflected all the Pile Anchors with accurate lance handling.

But, Philuffy also closed the distance by kicking on the ground and visited a fist using Typhon's powerful arm on Celis.

Her frame's joints twisted and a sure kill barrage of fists was unleashed at high speed. Celis dodged or evaded by running to the sky. Typhon chased her using its terrifying leaping power and unleashed a spinning kick after a feinted straight punch.

Furthermore she fired multiple Pile Anchors to the ground. They pulled on Typhon like rope with a claw attached, changing its orbit midair and evaded

Lindwurm's counterattack.

Typhon landed down on the practice ground at high speed, shook off the opponent's aim with circling trajectory, dashed to beneath Celis, fired countless Pile Anchors once more, and sniped at Lindwurm.

Philuffy casually caught the three Daggers that were thrown from the air as counterattack, she then turned around her body from side to side and threw them back several times faster. Celis who predicted that circled to Typhoon's back instantly using Divine Gate. This time she took distance to be able to dodge Philuffy's kick and unleashed a thrust that was laced with electricity. But, Philuffy too seemed to know it. She jumped forward to dodge, twisted her body and faced towards Celis, then midair she fired several more Pile Anchors.

Celis slipped through that attack that aimed to hold her back and seize her, and pursued with a lance attack.

Philuffy seemed to perceive reflexively that she couldn't dodge it. She met Celis with her fastest forward charge.

Fist and lance's tip collided, and intense sparks and impact burst out.

——.

Such offense and defense that was like raging waves were deployed without even a breathing gap.

Even the female students at the spectator seats who were cheering them on loudly at first were watching the fight while holding their breath before they knew it.

「Celis. Sorry but I leave the rest to you. I'll be at my limit soon.」

A few minutes later, Sharis who came down on the ground sheathed her Sword Device and declared her own defeat.

All her weapons were already destroyed, and even her Wyvern's armor had deep gashes on it.

Her state was because she launched attacks at Lux several times even knowing that she would receive counters by Lux's Critical Hit, in order to pull his attention to her, but she was literally reaching her limit.

「I understand. Please withdraw quickly. You are too reckless.」

「I see. Then, do your best, okay? I'll leave it to you.」

Sharis leaked out a wry smile and headed to the door that connected to outside the ring in a jog. It was then,

「You fought in a way that doesn't put shame on your status as my partner, Sharis.」

Such words of gratitude were softly said to her.

「Haa, haa..... Haaa. tsu—」

Right after Sharis exited the ring, Typhon's armor that Philuffy was wearing was also losing light and it was automatically dispelled.

It was because the exhaustion of the user reached the limit, but thinking how it was used continuously at full output, even though using a Divine Drag-Ride already consumed energy intensely even at the best of times, she had been using it for too long.

In the case it was confirmed that the armor was forcefully dispelled, that participant would also be considered as defeated, and they had to leave the stage right away.

「Haa, haa.....sorry, Lu.....chan」

Philuffy cast her eyes down with her head hung low while walking away with a limping gait.

Philuffy was usually silent and didn't show much emotion, but she was exerting her best effort for him while sweating all over her body and out of breath.

Lux thanked his important childhood friend while he too exerted his last fighting spirit.

「Right. Leave it to me, Phi-chan.」

Since the battle started, Philuffy did something unexpected and commenced close quarter combat, but she couldn't score a direct hit on Celis's Lindwurm.

It seemed that she really wasn't serious even in her fight against Lisha and

Krulcifer.

But, thanks to Philuffy challenging Celis proactively, Lux was able to memorize that exquisite lance handling with his eyes somehow.

Celis's movement had no wasted motion and it was hard to see through, but with this it would be a more even fight somehow.

「.....Why?」

When their respective partners withdrew and it became a schema of a one-on-one duel, Celis suddenly let out a voice.

Celis too, although she didn't receive any damage worth mentioning, but her composure was already gone.

In order to defend against Philuffy's fierce offense, other than her Lightning Lance for close quarter combat, and Starlight Zero for long range, almost all her armaments were out of use.

「Why are you fighting? Is it for restoring a male dominated society? Or else are you trying to raise an achievement in this academy where noble ladies are gathering, so that you can get involved with this country once more? As the survivor of the Old Empire that once ruled this country—」

「.....」

Her voice was the same like usual, an aloof voice of a ruler.

But, Lux could hear that there was a slight hesitation inside Celis's voice.

「Please answer. Lux, you are—」

Lux made a small sigh, then he softly touched the collar of a criminal with his Drag-Ride's finger.

Now that he was looking back once more, he wondered why.

Was it atonement towards the perished country that he failed to save?

Was it regret of being unable to fulfill his responsibility as prince?

Was it for the sake of answering the feelings of these girls who he ought to respect?

No—.

「I tried the whole time to walk the right path, and made a mistake.」

All the reason above sounded true, but surely it was different.

「What should I do? Is the current me able to do something more than that? I don't know the answer. But—」

Surely Celis was the same like himself. That was what Lux thought.

She tried to do her best in order to guide this country, however, at the same time she was lost.

Actually, should she cooperate with a man? She was worrying and suffering even about that.

「What can the current me do. It is continuing to hope for the best by none other than my own judgment. I will fight for that, that's what I'm thinking right now.」

「.....I understand.」

Celis gathered her breath slightly hearing that answer, and she readied her lance.

The mock battle's remaining time had just gone below three minutes.

Most likely, this would be the last exchange of offense and defense.

「Let's decide this, Lux Arcadia!」

- Gakiin!*

Celis yelled and aimed the main cannon connected to Lindwurm's shoulder toward Lux.

The special armament that wasn't used even through the intense fight and saved until now, Starlight Zero.

Against the super wide range attack that would blow up the whole practice ground, even Lux wouldn't be able to defend against it.

「-.....!?」

Before the energy finished loading, Lux's Wyvern flew in at high speed, but at that moment Celis's spear became wrapped with electricity and shined radiantly.

Right after that, she teleported instantly using Divine Gate and took distance from Lux to the very limit.

The act of loading energy at first was—fake!

「Starlight Zero.」

Together with Celis's voice, the light ball of compressed energy was fired—it was then!

—

「—GU, oOoOOOOooOOoOOoooooOOOOOOON!」

—

A never heard before strange sound resounded in the surroundings, making anyone who heard it think of it as the evil omen of calamity.

The surroundings fell silent as though time had stopped, an odd tension was born.

At the same time, the practice ground and spectator seats were starting to shake rattlingly along with terrible rumbling from the earth.

—

「Wha, what is, this sound—?」

—

Someone among the female students at the spectator seats leaked out that mutter, it was at that moment.

- GOBAA-!*

Several dozen tentacles crawled out all at once from the ground of the practice ground like pillars.

「Wha.....-!?!」

Without even any time for the two who were in the middle of battle to hold their breath, they were attacked by the tentacles and Lindwurm's balance crumbled.

Right after that, the compressed light bullet of Starlight Zero hit the center of the practice ground and exploded.

Part 6

「Big trouble board chairman! There is a messenger from the royal capital!」

Inside the board chairman office, a young man who was the board chairman's secretary aide opened the door with a force as though slamming it open and tumbled inside.

「According to the large force that carried out scouting near the ocean of the Heiburg Republic, 『The Ragnarok crumbled away while still in a petrified state』 they said.....! Bu, but, they confirmed that there was something inside it, and they found the trace of something travelling underwater! The whereabouts of the content inside it—is still unknown!」

The board chairman's aide was talking with a shaking voice.

The figure of the Ragnarok that made the country move the army's main force to observe and monitor it was gone from that place.

Furthermore, there was a sign of it moving underwater. The Ragnarok that was a disaster on the level that could make a country perish was revived, and it was already starting to move, a large force of the New Kingdom's military was splendidly diverted.

If it attacked the royal capital—it might be destroyed within today.

「.....So it used camouflage. It got us.」

「Wha, what are we going to do headmaster!? In order to search for the Ragnarok and strengthen the protection of the royal capital, requesting Syvalles's cooperation urgently is—」

「It's unfortunate, but I discovered it already. Perhaps it's that right, the aforementioned Ragnarok Poseidon.」

「Eh.....!? Wha, ah—!?」

Pointed out by Headmaster Relie, the secretary turned his gaze to outside the window.

At the practice ground that could be seen from afar, there was half the body of a gigantic monster that reached to the sky.

「I'll give you a new task right now. Contact the city mayor, and tell him to evacuate the citizens from this first block. And then, can you also dispatch a rescue request to the Drag-Knights at each city block and near the Ruins?」

Relie took off her coat and quickly gave instruction.

「Whe, where are you planning to go!? It's dangerous! If the description of the Ragnarok that was written in the Old Empire's secret document is correct, the enemy has strength on the level that could destroy a small country—」

「It's unfortunate but—a person in charge has various special jobs to do you see. I have to go do everything that I can.」

Relie smiled bitterly while going outside the room. It was then that a female staff member came running and raised her voice.

「E, excuse me! It seems that a force of Drag-Knights with unknown affiliation is appearing in every city block of Cross Field! All of them are heading simultaneously toward the first block where the Academy is!」

「.....Heiburg really got us huh.」

Finally sweat trickled down Relie's forehead and she scratched her head.

And then, she slowly started walking to outside the academy.

Part 7

「Uu..... Ku.....」

「Are you all right? Celis-senpai!？」

Half of the wall surrounding the practice ground collapsed, while the ground was deeply sinking in. There Lux was helping Celis along with Lindwurm to sit up.

The explosion of Starlight Zero seemed to just barely not reach the spectator seats.

However, Celis who deployed a barrier to suppress the explosion was blown away. Her consciousness was hazy temporarily.

「What happened? Just what is.....」

「I don't know. But, most likely, that's—」

Lux lifted up his face, at that moment it could be seen.

「GUOOOooooooooOOOOOOoOOoOOO!」

It was a sight that resembled hell.

Several hundred thick green tentacles were growing out, breaking through the earth surface of the practice ground and the spectator seats.

The super large Abyss that was taking up a position in the practice ground was digging up the hard earth, smashed the surrounding stone wall haphazardly, and its momentum was growing gradually.

At the center was a huge head and protruding purple eyeballs.

That figure was even more ominous and several hundred times bigger than the squid type Abyss that was called Kraken—.

That gigantic body that occupied the whole area of the practice ground and

spectator seats was there.

「Don't tell me, that is—!」

「Yes. Most likely that is the Ragnarok that the Old Empire unleashed upon the world.」

The Abyss that originally should wield its menace in the sea was for some reason invading here from underground. It was incomprehensible.

But, it was hiding a strength that made it as though something like disadvantage from terrain was nothing at all for it. That fact was obvious no matter from which point of view.

The scream of students running around in confusion could be heard from the spectator seats where countless tentacles were waving around.

Students with spare strength were trying to fight back the tentacles somehow, but weapons like Blade or Cannon were entangled and taken away by the tentacles one after another, and then they were crushed in its grip easily. Seeing that caused the students to lose their fighting spirit quickly.

—

「Wa, wait a second.....!? I, I've never heard, something like this—」

「What's this!? This kind of thing.....this is not an opponent that someone like us can fight.....!」

「He,help! I don't care if it's Syvalles or the royal capital's army! So, someone—」

—

Even the girls who belonged to the military academy and accumulated diligent study day by day to defeat Abyss lost the color of their faces and ran about in confusion.

They were in a disadvantageous situation, to the degree that they could only barely save those who got entangled by the many tentacles before they could be brought to that fiendish mouth.

Most of the members of Syvalles weren't in this place for some reason, so

even with several instructors including Raigree also fighting hard, their number was overwhelmingly insufficient.

The number of the student who could fight was decreasing, but the tentacles kept growing one after another, increasing their number.

The number of tentacles already surpassed several hundreds even based from what Lux could see.

The scream of the students could be heard in the area, it was then, 「Prostrate under god's name! SuppressorHeaven Voice!」

- DOON!* A terrific rumble in the ground could be heard. Poseidon's head was sinking into the ground.

At the same time, Tiamat's special armament, LegionAirborne Fortress, several of them pierced the tentacles capturing the students and tore them apart.

In addition, the sliced section of the tentacles were frozen in succession, preventing it from swift regeneration.

「Lisha-sama! Krulcifer-san!」

Lux looked up from the large hole with its bottom missing. There he could see red and blue Drag-Rides.

While everyone was continuing to fight defensively and escape, only two people were launching fierce attacks against the Ragnarok.

Using that opening, Lux destroyed the lump of rubble overhead with Blade.

「It looks like we will be able to manage somehow huh, Krulcifer.」

「Yes. That's only if we can use our full power continually like this for long, though.....」

Lisha and Krulcifer prevailed for the moment, but as expected, perhaps because they were directly feeling the strength of the Ragnarok, they weren't optimistic.

As long as the core wasn't destroyed, an Abyss wouldn't die.

「Wait for me, I too will soon—!」

Lux too was going to join the fight using Wyvern, it was then,

「—!?」

- DOON!* A large explosion sound could be heard, everyone including Lux was dumbfounded.

Inside the Academy ground, at a distance from the practice ground—the vicinity of the girl's dormitory and the school building was blown up.

On top of that, they could see several dozen Wyverns with unfamiliar coatings applied on their frames.

「What's that!? That's not the New Kingdom military's Drag-Rides! What in the world—」

That Lisha's yell was cut off must be because she thought of the true identity of the intruders.

If it was the rebel army that espoused the Old Empire, the Drag-Rides should be painted gray.

This force was of unknown origin, but it was apparent that they were enemies of this Academy and took advantage of this Ragnarok attack.

- BIKliih.....!*

「-.....!? This thing, it's already regenerated.....!?」

Looking there, Poseidon that was flattened by the gravity load of Tiamat and had all its legs frozen was recovering its momentum once more.

It crawled up while flattened by gravity, and tore off the tips of its frozen legs, then those parts began to regenerate.

「This looks bad. Not just the Ragnarok, we also have to go reinforce the academy—」

「—This is an order. Please go to defend the Academy. Lizsharte, Krulcifer.」

At that time, Celis flew overhead Poseidon and calmly ordered that.

Even with blood flowing in drips from her shoulder, she readied her lance with composure.

「Celis-senpai! Don't be reck—」

「Just this much is no trouble. I can defeat it alone. Allowing the enemy's approach until this far is my error. I will take responsibility.」

When Lux yelled, Celis's tense voice replied back.

Certainly if it was with Celis's strength, she might be able to fight equally even against this atrocious Ragnarok.

But—

「You must not! At the very least cooperate with me—」

「Both of you, please move. I already said my instruction.」

「Kuh.....!?!」

Lisha groaned a bit and after a few seconds,

「It's unfortunate, this time we don't have any more spare strength to just fight this huge thing.」

Lisha was showing a self-depreciating smile while directing at Lux a gaze that was filled with some kind of determination.

「Lux! I'll leave everything to your decision about the action that you should take! If you aren't given any order by that great and mighty duke's daughter, then fight with your seriousness!」

She yelled like that with a grin even while showing a fatigued and agitated state.

「Come to birth. The wedge that opposes heaven and earth, the gouged dragon of chaos. Chimeratech Wyvern!」

Lisha dispelled Tiamat's armor and wore the original Drag-Ride that she personally created.

That Drag-Ride that was a combination of two types of Drag-Rides had been modified into an even more fiendish form than before.

She must be intending to protect the Academy while avoiding the exhaustion from a Divine Drag-Ride as much as possible.

「I too greatly want to show my good side to you though—」

Krulcifer suddenly showed a cool smile and then she raised her voice.

「But it doesn't look like I will be able to do that in the current situation where I cannot even properly use Wise BloodWisdom of Fortune and Calamity. —I'll leave this place to you, hero-san.」

「Right..... both of you—leave it to me!」

Lux nodded, and at the same time Lisha and Krulcifer flew towards the Academy together.

Lux recalled Lisha's words inside his head and he made a faint smile.

(The action, that I should take huh.....)

Exactly as she said, Lux thought.

He still hadn't settled it with Celis.

That meant that there was still no ground for Celis to give him an order.

In that case, he would only defeat the disaster before his eyes, with the greatest strength he had as the Black Hero.

However—.

「.....」

Suddenly Lux ran his gaze at the practice ground area that was destroyed by tentacles.

「Philuffy.....?」

The girl he looked for wasn't in sight.

It weighed on him, but there was no way he could just leave alone the disaster before his eyes.

(First, I have to grasp the core's location—!)

When Lux resolved himself, he flew following Celis who was readying her lance wordlessly.

Part 8

「Ku-ku-ku! As expected from the military academy where the new kingdom's ojou-samayoung ladies are gathering. Quite a lot of pretty things are here en masse, ain't that right!？」

Inside the Academy's ground—.

On the narrow path continuing to the girl dormitory and school building from the practice ground, several Drag-Knights were blocking the path.

「Wha, what are you people!? Whi, which unit do you belong to!? Something like this—」

「Ri, right now there is a huge Abyss nearby don't you know!? This isn't the time to jest around!」

Two second year female students who were running ahead were raising their voices like that.

They were returning to the school building after finishing their match in the campus selection battle. But midway they noticed the existence of the Ragnarok and hurriedly tried to go back to the practice ground. It was then that these mysterious male Drag-Knights surrounded them.

Each of the men were clad in a Drag-Ride with greatly different armaments, but for some reason their frame's paintings were uniform.

They were the same like the Drag-Knights using Wyverns to bombard the Academy from the sky.

「Hee. That's scary. We gotta guard these ladies politely then.」

But, even when the men saw the tentacles that could be seen at the practice ground in the distance, their complexion didn't change and they cackled loudly instead.

「Oi oi? Is it okay for us to stop by in this kind of place? We are going to get scolded by those Cerberus bunches yeah? Our objective is looking for the headmaster and that thing right?」

「Who damn cares. We are usually worked like dogs in dangerous missions. What are we gonna do without this kind of special reward? While we are searching for that thing, we got into battle with these girls who stood in our way and captured them. There are plenty of ways to make use of them later y'know.」

「.....-!?!」

The words of the men that were filled with malice caused the two female students to go pale.

「—It's useless even if you talk to them, my cute juniors. These guys are probably mercenary Drag-Knights.」

The one who said that from slightly behind was Sharis who was lending her shoulder to Philuffy.

「Are you guys employed by Heiburg's military? Must be troublesome to go as far as the New Kingdom.」

「Sha, Sharis-senpai.....!?!」

Sharis showed a smile to the two students who ran towards her in a panic, then she whispered.

「Leave this place to me. Also—take her and run, if possible call for help.」

Sharis's own Wyvern was already in a greatly damaged state, her stamina was also at the limit, but in front of her defenseless juniors, she could only say that.

She would attract their attention while the others escaped. Sharis thought that it would be great if she could do such a thing.

「Ye, yes-!」

「You think we are gonna let you-!」

The moment the two second year students answered, a man before them yelled.

At the same time, he unleashed one of a Drag-Ride's basic techniques, Howling Roar.

- GOU-* The air whirled and a shockwave shot through in radial shape.

「KYAAAAAH.....!？」

The four people there were all blown backwards, Sharis too struck her back hard on the tree behind her.

「Kuh..... uu.....!」

- Cluck* Sharis and the two second year students fainted with their necks bending down.

「.....nn」

In that place it was only Philuffy who barely held on to her consciousness, she was standing up even while staggering.

But, the impact from getting blown away caused the sword belt on her waist to slip. The Sword Device of Typhon fell into a thicket that was out of her reach.

「Oops, was the power a bit too weak? Well doesn't matter. It will be a waste even if you die now.」

「Ah, uh.....」

Philuffy pressed her head while groaning listlessly.

Light was already vanishing from her eyes.

「.....Even so, this girly is really a quality good even among these bunches huh. It's unthinkable that she is still a brat with that body of hers.」

The male mercenary crawled his gaze on the chest of Philuffy who was still wearing a pilot suit while licking his lips.

「After we have a lot of fun, we will let you go home when your family pays the ransom for you. With your body chopped into pieces though.」

「.....ill us?」

「Haahn.....? What's up, huh, Ojou-sama? Your voice is too feeble we can't

hear anything y'know?」

The male mercenary asked back with a vulgar grin.

They didn't notice while standing in an overwhelmingly superior position in front of a good quality prey.

That the girl before their eyes was clad in a terribly hollow aura.

「You will—kill us?」

「Yeah, tough luck but that's what's gonna happen at the end. My bad, but just give up. You have totally lived well until now and made a lot of good memories right? This, too, is the fate from god.」

「.....That's, no good. Such thing. Because—」

Suddenly, the eyeballs of Philuffy who was showing a hollow expression were dyed with the color of darkness.

Just one point, it was only the pupil that snapped open, tinged with sharp golden light.

Philuffy lightly pulled back her arm that was dangling down limply, and took a stance of punching.

The men laughed without noticing anything from too much leeway.

「Hahaha! What are you gonna do? It's dangerous you know, so stop it. You will get inju—gobah!?!」

The men noticed the bizarreness after it was over.

There was the sound of destruction of metal crumpling and cracks spreading.

An instant later, a scream and blood surged out from the man's mouth.

「Wha.....ah!?!」

The remaining mercenaries who saw that scene opened their eyes wide speechlessly.

「I, impossible-.....!? No way!? A bare hand, against a Drag-Ride—!?!」

The girl pierced through the barrier of the Drag-Ride using a fist of flesh and blood, destroying the Drag-Ride's armor really easily.

In front of that impossible reality, the men's face were dyed with fear.

「.....I cannot, die anymore.」

Philuffy faced the next man along with a smile that was dyed with bottomless darkness, and she pulled her fist.

Part 9

「GUOOOOoooOo!」

In the practice ground that was half destroyed, the Ragnarok was rampaging madly.

It swung around several hundred tentacles, spewed out smoke screen that was like mist from its mouth, and it was gradually increasing its method of attack.

Lux continued to defend and dodge against that, but he really couldn't shift into counterattack.

Critical Hit that returned the opponent's destructive power back as it was had little effect against Poseidon's soft body.

Thus, if it was seen from the side right now, Lux was devoting himself to evasion that could be seen as buying time.

But,

「Lux Arcadia. I order you to take shelter. Your strength is unnecessary for me.」

- BASHllll-!*

Celis cut apart tentacles using Lightning Lance that was clad in electricity while muttering that suddenly.

At first it sounded like a statement that was obstinately rejecting 『the male Lux』, but—.

Lux guessed Celis's intention from those words.

「—Understood. Be careful.」

Right after replying, Lux escaped to high in the sky outside the attack range of

the tentacles.

At that moment, Celis moved.

「Divine Gate.」

She whispered quietly, and at the same time the Lindwurm she wore was wrapped in a halo of seven colors.

And then, the moment several hundred tentacles assaulted Celis, her figure disappeared.

「GlllH!?!」

When Poseidon raised a bizarre cry, Celis was already in front of the enemy.

「Starlight Zero.」

The super compressed light bullet was fired from zero distance into the ugly mouth that was opened wide like a hell hole.

Right after that, Celis retreated to the sky and flew higher than Lux. She then readied her Lightning Lance that was clad in intense electricity.

「The finishing blow.」

「Celis-senpai! Don't tell me—」

Without even any time for Lux to stop her, Celis charged towards the Ragnarok below at the same time with the explosion of the light bullet.

Hitting the opponent with two types of attack simultaneously by oneself, 『Double Attack』.

Celis commenced it, aiming at the instant when the enemy was blasted from inside.

While the area was shook by explosion blast and shockwave, Celis deeply stabbed Poseidon's torso without even balking at getting damaged by her own bombardment.

—

「—GllIAAAAAAAH.....!」

—

It spread out a shriek that was unthinkable to be something of this world while splattering blue blood to the surroundings.

It acted violently for a while and threw all its tentacles to the surroundings. And then it stopped moving completely without even a twitch.

It seemed that Celis grasped the position of the core through the process of stabbing her spear on it many times.

Using her last two special armaments, she executed the double attack with the resolve of getting bombed.

She really defeated the Ragnarok by herself alone.

That fact that was like a dream stole Lux's gaze for a while.

「Uu..... aa」

As expected, she might be considerably exhausted. Celis pulled out her stabbed lance while her body shook unsteadily.

「Celis-senpai-!」

Lux approached beside her in panic and supported her, it was then,

「.....I should have told you, my order already. Worrying about this me is—」

「It's necessary.」

「Eh.....?」

Celis tried to shake off Lux's hand with an obstinate voice, but Lux stopped her with few words.

「Why did you do something that reckless? If you are hurt, the students here will all be sad. What am I going to do if someone won't worry about a person who pretends not to feel pained when it's painful?」

「..... You are—」

Lux's lonely voice caused Celis to open her eyes wide in surprise for a moment.

Her beautiful jade eyes shook slightly, but she immediately shook her head and made a resolute expression.

「I'm all right. More importantly, I have to go save everyone who is being attacked by the strange force—」

Saying that, she tried to fly towards the girl dormitory and school building, it was at that moment,

—

「HA-HA-HA-HA-HAA—!」

—

A shrill loud laughter came from the spectator seats of the half destroyed practice ground.

「.....-!?!」

When Lux and Celis looked at one area of the seating, a small silhouette wearing a jet black robe was there.

Vibrant silver hair and sharp eye glint were peeking out from under the hood that was snugly covering until the figure's head.

That hair color—was the same as Lux and his little sister Airi, the color that was inherited by the imperial family of the Old Empire.

The moment Lux saw that, his heart thumped heavily.

「That's—don't tell me!?!」

「As expected from the mighty duke's daughter, the so called Academy's strongest. Splendid, splendid, how strong. —But, don't tell me. Don't tell me that you are having a thought, even for just a tiny bit, that it will end with just this much? You aren't riiight?」

The figure who narrowed their eyes under the hood put a golden horn flute on their lips, and raised their voice loudly.

「Now, entertain me quickly! How all you lowly maggots get eaten, your despairing face, the end of the road of the traitors, show me and satisfy this thirst of mine!」

—

- iiiiiiii!*
—

The moment the black robed figure murmured, a discordant sound rang out.

At the same time, *zun!* the ring of the practice ground caved in and deep cracks entered the ground.

「Wha.....!？」

The moment Celis's eyes opened wide in shock, it showed its figure.

「Gu.....—GUaaAAAAAaaAAAA!」

Poseidon that got its core pierced and had completely fallen silent for a moment raised a howl that sounded like a shriek and it was resurrected once more. The several hundred tentacles that were burned to a crisp and dangled on the ground limply were getting regenerated in the blink of an eye.

「This is, that time's—!？」

When Lux went on an outing with Celis, the Chimera showed the same transformation like this.

Dark red lines were running through its whole body, and ominous killing intent was filling the whole practice ground to the brim.

The eyeballs dulled darkly, its pupils opened and shined.

「VAaaaAAAAAAAH!」

The Academy's ground was shaking fiercely along with Poseidon's howl.

「This is bad.....-!」

At this rate, the academy itself would be destroyed.

Celis who thought that readied her Lightning Lance. It was at that timing,

- DOoN!*
—

Lindwurm was blown away by an explosion blast and Celis crashed on a mountain of rubble.

「Wha.....-!？」

When Lux turned to look behind in surprise, over there was—.

「As expected from Celis-neesama. You aren't defeated yet.」

Saniya who was smiling calmly was looking down on Celis from the sky.

Completely different from her usual intellectual appearance, her long curly hair was disheveled. Her appearance looked wild.

Furthermore she was wearing a Wyvern that was covered with a bizarre dark red pattern, the same like the Ragnarok.

「What are you doing, Saniya.....?」

The girl who idolized her since their time meeting as first year students. That girl was shooting a Cannon at her. Celis was unable to accept that fact right away.

In contrast to the shaken Celis, Saniya readied the Cannon in her hand and grinned fearlessly.

「Aa, you mean this? This is called a B-blood Wyvern. A new weapon that was recently introduced into our unit, it's a little bit risky, but it's a strong frame that won't lose even against a Divine Drag-Ride.」

「What are you saying, you are.....」

Celis who was helped to stand by Lux asked with a shaking voice.

At that instant, the black robed silhouette on the collapsed spectator seats laughed loudly.

「Really slow aren't you, as expected from the muscle-brained duke's daughter-sama! You were just dancing in our palm you know! Saniya over there is a spy that I sent in here! A spy from the Heiburg Republic where this me is acting as the military strategist you see!」

「-.....!」

The words of the robed figure made Celis speechless.

On the other hand, Saniya was directing a dubious face at the robed figure.

「Is that fine? To say out that name here?」

「Hahn? What's with you? Don't tell me you are feeling like letting go even one of this bunch huh? Make them forget everything in this place. That's your job, Heiburg's dog.」

「Understood—and so because of that, it's a shame, but please die. Celis-oneesama.」

「.....Wh, why!?!」

Saniya was looking down with a cold smile. Even so Celis still called out to her.

「Was everything a lie!? Even the things that you told me..... Even the poor treatment and terrible acts that you received from males that I heard from you, all of those—」

Her voice and expression were pleading. Saniya answered her with a smile that cut down all of those.

「Celis-neesama. It's thanks to you, you know? Thanks to you being incompetent, I could progress until this far smoothly. It's thanks to you, that I can destroy this country. Thank you. I'm grateful to you. I will properly spread that foolish reputation of you in my country, that's why—sayonara.」

- GOO-!*

At the same time when Saniya finished talking, she brandished her large Blade and slashed at Celis.

Lux blocked it with his Blade. At that instant, a sharp crack ran through the Blade in Saniya's hand.

The special move that combined a Barrier Blade with the defense to counterattack, Critical Hit.

Saniya who saw it once more showed a fed up face and spat out.

「Haa..... You again? I really owe you from the mock battle. Rather than that, is it fine? That you are covering for your grandfather's enemy?」

Lux frowned hearing the incomprehensible words Saniya suddenly said.

- GOU-!* Saniya's Wyvern unleashed Howling Roar.

Lux who came forward to protect Celis got hit fully by that and he was sent flying.

「Kuh.....!」

Saniya's Wyvern looked mostly the same outside as a normal Wyvern, but its power in all aspects had increased by several times.

That output that wouldn't be left behind even against a Divine Drag-Ride shocked Lux while he,

「What do you mean? The words just now—」

He glared at Saniya who was grinning fearlessly midair and asked her that.

「What a clown you are, chore prince. Don't you know anything?」

「Saniya! That's—, it's only you that I.....!」

Saniya answered while sneering at the voice that Celis squeezed out pleadingly.

「That woman was the one who killed your grandfather. That girl once told your grandfather about the rotten politics of the Old Empire, because of that he made that counsel which caused him to get imprisoned and die.」

「——」

Lux who heard that stopped moving. Celis's face paled.

A moment of stiffening. In that opening, Saniya's Blade that was destroyed by Lux's Critical Hit was tinged with dark red light, and it was restored in the blink of an eye.

「It's over already for you guys. My subordinates are occupying this Academy! Even those two Divine Drag-Ride users are currently facing guys at the same level as me. At this rate, you all will become fodder for the Ragnarok!」

And then, Saniya readied her Cannon that had a dark red carved seal on its surface and fired.

A huge beam of light attacked Celis who was shivering from fear.

At that moment, black mist spread out along with the Ragnarok's howl and blackened out Lux's field of vision.

「—I'm sorry.」

The surrounding was enveloped in jet black darkness. The wall crumbled from explosions and rubble was falling down. Amidst such a situation, Celis's disappearing voice could be heard.

「I was, unable to say it..... About the matter of Wade-sensei—your grandfather.....」

It was a depressed dark voice that couldn't even possibly be imagined coming from the usual Celis.

That voice was merely audible to Lux's ear.

「When I was little in the Ralgris House, I accidentally heard about a bad story of the Old Empire. At that time I didn't think of anything thoroughly, I was merely thinking, that it would be fine if I just did the right thing.....」

「And then, you talked, to my grandfather—?」

Lux asked towards the direction where Celis's voice came from.

「.....Yes. And then, Wade-sensei who made his counsel towards the Old Empire was imprisoned. Simply because I said an unnecessary thing, even you got chased out of the imperial court—even so, at the end sensei said 『you are not mistaken』 to me.」

Inside the darkness where even her figure couldn't be seen.

That voice that sounded like crying made Lux's chest feel pained.

「Since then, I kept thinking all this time. Because of my fault, sensei who did the right thing died. That's why, I have to do the right thing in his place. Protecting all the girls in the New Kingdom, keeping you away, too, because of the danger. Those are what I should do. That was what I was thinking all this time, and yet—」

「That's why Celis-senpai, tried to fight the Ragnarok alone, without receiving my assistance.....?」

In the past, she killed Lux's grandfather with the words of herself who was still

a child.

Exactly because she was regretting it, that she tried to become stronger and more righteous than anyone in the New Kingdom. She was also trying to keep her teacher's grandson, Lux, far away from the battlefield because of that.

「And yet, I was unable. I was, tricked..... I also betrayed everyone's expectations, and I also involved you into this.....」

「.....」

She mourned her actions in the past that she did because she thought it was right.

She shouldered the burden and fought alone.

Just like the current him who was unable to accomplish his duty as a prince in the past, she was fighting to protect this country and Lux.

「I'm sorry. You resent me right? But it's fine. I swear I'll protect you, even at the price of my life..... I swear, I'll absolutely save you, that's why—」

- Slither*, the sound of a tentacle crawling could be heard.

It weaved through the gap of the rubble surrounding the two to assault Celis who was trying to stand up, it was at that moment—

「You're wrong! I'm—!」

- Zashu-!* That tentacle was cut down. In front of Celis, Lux was standing in the way of that tentacle with his sword lifted before her eyes.

It was that black Sword Device, that saved Celis when she was attacked by the Chimera.

「Black, Sword Device.....!? That's, the sword Luno carried—」

Celis opened her eyes wide and raised a shaking voice.

In response to that, Lux smiled quietly.

「I'm sorry for staying quiet. I'll receive any scolding properly later on, that's why—」

And then, he readied his sword toward the black space that hadn't cleared yet, and yelled the Passcode.

「—Manifest, the violent dragon devouring the gods' flesh and blood. Sever the sky of black cloud, Bahamut!」

Right after that, faint light particles converged in high speed and a huge black Drag-Ride appeared.

「Jet black Divine Drag-Ride.....!? Don't tell me, you are!?!」

「Please don't worry. I don't resent Celis-senpai or anything. After all, I like you who are a strong, gentle, but really awkward person.」

Lux didn't answer her question and told her that with a gentle voice.

「That's why, please wait just for a little bit. I will protect you, without fail. In the place of my grandfather who you respected.」

Right after that, Bahamut flew up, breaking through from the collapsing ground.

「—So you came! Black Hero! It really helps to save time and effort that I can even kill you here!」

The instant Lux wearing Bahamut appeared, Saniya floated an evil grin and swooped down towards him.

But,

「Sorry.」

Lux said that with a voice that sounded completely disinterested, then he dealt seven consecutive flashes in super high speed toward Saniya.

「Right now, I don't have any free time to look after you.」

「-.....!」

Countless slash lined ran on Saniya's B-blood Wyvern—and it crumbled.

Bahamut's Divine Raiment. The magic of compression and strengthening. Lux settled the match right away with the super accelerated Quick Shot that was unleashed by using that.

「Kuh.....!」

Shock surfaced on Saniya's expression, but she instantly changed it into a fearless grin.

「Hmph! But, it's over already!」

Saniya lost the propulsive power from her back wings and she was starting to free fall, but she yelled victoriously.

「Something like the legend of the Black Hero is just foolish bullshit! Taking on 1200 Drag-Knights alone in reality, who would believe such a thing! You won't be able to stop the Ragnarok by yourself alone! You also won't be able to save the girls at the Academy's school building! This is—your loss!」

At the same time as that voice, Poseidon that finished regenerating all its tentacles caught Lux's figure with both its eyeballs.

The female students who were taking shelter at the corner of the spectator seats raised screams of terror.

At that time when all prospects of doing anything seemed lost, Lux was thinking.

That Ragnarok would regenerate completely even if it was cut with speed or smashed with strength.

The way to finish it off, existed at the deepest part of that gigantic body. The complete destruction of the core. That was the only way.

Recalling the offense and defense that Celis showed him, Lux racked his brain.

The students at the far away school building who were being attacked by a lot of Wyvern.

The things remaining in the half-destroyed practice ground and spectator seats.

In that place where innumerable mock battles had been carried out and where more than a hundred students had fought, there were countless equipment falling around.

Grasping the terrain and situation.

Recognizing the two 『enemy』 ‘s behavior and capabilities.

His thought accelerated and sharpened keenly like a needle.

And then the next moment—Lux’s scenario was completed.

「Linker BurstResonance Surge.」

Bahamut’s two eyes shined red at the same time with Lux’s voice. The surrounding space vibrated.

The atmosphere was trembling rattlingly. The fallen rubble and countless Drag-Ride’s armaments were caught in it.

「.....Floating the surrounding material? —What are you planning to do?」

Saniya who landed on the ground looked up at Bahamut with a dubious face. Linker Burst was the special armament installed inside Bahamut.

It was an ability that interfered with the surrounding material, produced a special force field, and moved objects.

Its power wasn’t something strong. Its strength couldn’t destroy something or send something flying, pulling little things towards the user was the best that could be done with its strength.

It didn’t look like it would be of any use to defeat the Ragnarok. —But,

「VaaOAAAAAA!」

Right after that, dozens of muddy black tentacles of the Ragnarok assaulted Lux—

—

- ZAN-!*

—

「Gi.....!?!」

All of that was tore apart into pieces instantly, almost at the same time.

「.....Eh!?!」

The female students who were taking shelter at the spectator seats far away,

Saniya, and even Celis too were holding their breaths seeing that bizarre scene.

It started with the strike from Reload on Fire that was unleashed once more as the beginning.

The back wings of Bahamut was tinged with light, then it dashed with a speed that the eye couldn't follow.

Chasing after it, Poseidon's several hundred tentacles flitted about.

But, not a single one could touch Bahamut's frame, the tentacles were cut apart one after another.

A consecutive attack without even a moment of rest, unleashing slashes simultaneously with evasive actions was started.

「.....What's that movement.....!? What, in the world—」

Saniya on the ground unconsciously muttered seeing that strange scene.

Lux was moving around at high speed, severing the tentacles attacking him one after another while throwing the things floating around him.

Countless Sword Devices and armaments that the female students dropped everywhere on the mountain of rubble in the practice ground.

They fluttered up due to Linker Burst and pulled towards Lux's hand. Lux grasped them one after another in the middle of the fight and threw them with a speed that was like a bullet.

Of course, he did that while evading and severing several hundred tentacles of Poseidon that were approaching him.

「What are you planning huh! Are you screwing around!? By doing that, even if you can dodge and cut—」

Saniya who was gradually shuddering toward that superhuman feat that looked like acrobatics raised her voice. It was then a voice came to her through the communication method between fellow Drag-Rides—the Dragon Voice.

『Sa, niya..... sama! It's an emergency! We were about to suppress half of the Academy but— Our Drag-Ride forces! They are getting shot down one by one!』

「What are you saying? From where is that kind of attack—.....-!?」

There, Saniya finally noticed the truth.

That Lux was fighting the Ragnarok while pulling armaments and Sword Devices towards him in midair, then throwing them far away in the distance and shot down the many Wyverns attacking the school building.

When Saniya panickedly turned her sight towards the sky above the Academy, the figure of several dozen Wyverns who were there had suddenly vanished from the sky.

「You are saying that they were shot down.....!? All of them!？」

With a dumbfounded expression, Saniya returned her gaze to nearby.

There, she saw Lux who was going to attack the Ragnarok right at that time.

Part 10

「End Action Perpetual Links.....is it.」

At the other side, when the Wyverns of the mercenary unit that was attacking the Academy's school building and girl dormitory were felled, Airi who was taking shelter in the building's cover muttered quietly.

「What is it Airi? That's—?」

Noct beside her asked her.

After Saniya destroyed Noct and Tillfur's Drag-Ride, she left finishing them off to the force following after her and flew towards the practice ground.

Lisha and others returned at that timing and they somehow escaped danger but—.

「It's one of the hidden techniques of a Drag-Knight that Nii-san uses. Normally, when Drag-Knights issue instructions to the control system, they can only give a fixed consecutive order. But—」

After saying that, Airi looked up to the sky above the far away practice ground before continuing.

「That interval is erased by controlling the Drag-Ride with only mind control operation right after moving with body control operation—. Before one action is over, a new order is given with alternate control operations without a pause, making it possible to attack in succession infinitely. That's what this technique does.」

「Perpetually, you say?」

Noct asked with an expression that was half-disbelieving, but Airi nodded without hesitation.

「There is an end to it. But, it's not when the attack is interrupted—」

Airi asserted with an expression that was filled with conviction.

「It will be when Nii-san, has finished predicting everything until the end.」

Part 11

「That's stupid.....! Impossible.....! Such thing, such bullshit is-!」

While Saniya was raising an angry yell, Poseidon's tentacles were cut one by one and a hole was being gouged on its torso.

The cut off tentacles regenerated repeatedly at high speed, then attacked Bahamut once more, where they were cut again.

The unreal scene was being repeated. —But,

「It's pointless! The life force of a Ragnarok has no limit! The one who will run out of strength first will be—」

「It will be the Ragnarok.」

When Saniya yelled that, a refined voice suddenly came from beside her.

When she looked over there, Celis who was gasping on the verge of death had recovered her usual aloof expression and stood up.

「Didn't you notice, Saniya. 『His』 movement—」

「Wh, at.....?」

When she returned her gaze to Lux's dance once more, she noticed it.

He was accelerating.

His movement when he dodged tentacles, bisected them, drove in the heaved up armaments and Sword Devices into Poseidon's torso, it was gradually accelerating, approaching toward the main body.

「He sent me a Dragon Voice. He was able to see through that Ragnarok's movement, 『It's thanks to you trying to protect me, and showed me your fight against it』.」

「That's impossible—」

Was she saying, that he saw through all the attacks of the Ragnarok that he had never even seen before, just through that short exchange?

If, her words were the truth—.

「.....It's mysterious. It's a blunder. Despite thinking, that I absolutely mustn't be on the side of the one getting praised—right now, I'm feeling really happy of being able to become his strength.」

Suddenly, Celis showed a smile and took her Sword Device.

And then, she pointed its tip towards Saniya who was similarly standing on the mountain of rubble.

「Please surrender, Saniya. Before this battle is over—」

She told that with a calm voice.

Part 12

Inside the collapsed practice ground, Lux was continuing high speed offense and defense while thinking.

He understood after controlling Bahamut in full throttle.

As expected, this Ragnarok truly had dreadful strength.

Using End Action with Bahamut gave him a great burden that surpassed the imagination.

The exhaustion from doing unceasing consecutive attacks was accumulating in Lux's body with certainty. His body was creaking.

Even so, this wasn't the first time he was challenging a fight where he mustn't lose.

And then, he could also experience that there are girls who were fighting together with him only here.

「Then—」



No matter how painful it was, there was no way he who was the only man in this Academy could throw in the towel.

There were also various troubles, but it was only at this kind of time that he felt glad that he was a man.

After all he didn't need to hesitate at all of getting hurt fighting for the sake of those girls.

「Here I go!」

And then, after including even the time to put his breathing in order in the middle of the fight, Lux unleashed the last consecutive sword flash.

- ZASHUU-!*

Along with that sharp sound of slashes, lines were running on the skin surface of Poseidon and blue blood spurted out.

The moment offensive action that alternately piled up body control operation and mind control operation rained down in a number that surpassed several hundreds, it became infinite slashes that pierced through that gigantic body.

The chain of slashes that repeatedly reached inside Poseidon's body, surpassed the high speed regeneration, and reached until the core.

And then,

—

「Ve, AAAAaaaAAAAaAaAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!」

—

The giant body of the Ragnarok blew out black smoke along with the scream of death agony, then it began to crumble.

That body which was entered with countless cracks exploded from inside, blue fresh blood surged out.

(With this—it's over.)

At that moment when Lux was convinced of victory—

—

- pakin!*

—

From the core of the Ragnarok that was smashed, a crystal about the size of a human head showed up.

「Eh.....?」

A fantastical object floating in the air, shining faintly with seven colors.

Even Lux—no, everyone there had never seen before such gem. The air of the battlefield instantly stopped.

「Bitch, it's your turn.」

At the same time with the robed figure's words, Saniya's B-blood Wyvern grasped that crystal and flew.

The Drag-Ride that should be destroyed into pieces was regenerating. Such fact also took Lux by surprise, but added to that, he was unable to move because of the burden from End Action.

「I want to pay back my debt to you in this place but, for now I'll retreat.」

Saniya spat out hatefully, then she put the robed figure on her shoulder and hovered midair.

「To be able to put down that Poseidon, it was quite surprising you know?」

The robed figure laughed with a derisive tone.

「But, it might be better if you didn't kill it. With this, you have completely angered me yeah, Black Hero-sama.」

「Who are you? That silver hair—」

- Thump*, even Lux who said such thing himself felt his heartbeat pounding hard.

His eldest brother from a different mother that he had been chasing after for a long time.

In that coup d'état that was the end of the Old Empire and became the

beginning of the New Kingdom, that man slaughtered all the humans of the empire's army and inside the castle wholesale—.

「Fugil..... Are you, Nii-san?」

「.....」

The robed figure took a breath slightly hearing Lux's question that was filled with nervousness.

「liiidiot.」

The hood that was hiding that face was quickly taken off.

「-.....!?!」

Lux reflexively held his breath seeing that bared face.

The left and right eyes, were asymmetrically colored gray and blue.

But, what surprised Lux more than that strange features, was that the true identity of that person who he thought as Fugil was actually a petite girl he was unfamiliar with.



「Fugil you saaay? Don't group me with that fishy guy. My name is Hayes. Memorize it caaarefully okay, fake prince. HYAHAAHAAAA!」

After telling that with loud laughter, the girl called Hayes escaped together with Saniya.

Currently Lux didn't have spare strength to chase after the enemy.

If Saniya's B-blood Wyvern was completely regenerated and she still had spare strength remaining, it would be him who got into danger if he pursued.

When the two enemies flew away from that place, Poseidon lost its color and immediately became black ash and scattered.

The same like that Chimera, it welcomed a strange end.

「Fuu.....」

The Ragnarok that suddenly appeared, and the mysterious crystal that came out from its corpse.

The spy of the Heiburg Republic that was advancing its military expansion, and a mysterious girl with the same hair color as Lux.

There were several puzzles remaining, but for the time being the battle was over.

『Oooi Lux! Can you hear me!? Everyone is safe on this side! Including your little sister, there is no one that is seriously injured! Those guys retreated!』

The Dragon Voice that came from Lisha let Lux to sigh in relief.

「Thank you for your hard work Lisha-sama. Here too the Ragnarok was defeated. Celis-senpai is also safe—」

When he replied like that and looked at Celis,

「.....」

He noticed that Celis was staring fixedly at him *jiii*— with a scandalous expression. Lux cut off the transmission.

「.....I'm displeased.」

After a while, Celis puffed up her cheeks slightly and muttered that.

Lux comprehended what she meant and panicked.

「I'm grateful that you forgave me, but as for the matter of Luno, I'm really displeased.」

「I, I'm really sorry! That's, I didn't intend to trick senpai with female clothing at first! It was the result of various coincidences and misunderstandings—」

「A lot of my embarrassing sides got seen by you. Unforgivable. It's unfair. Cowardly. How vexing. I'm displeased.」

「Tha, that's, if it is something that I can do, I'll do anything so—」

「—But what displeased me the most, is how I was feeling really happy that you saved me. I shouldn't be saved by anyone, even though I've been thinking like that all this time.....」

Celis showed a small smile that looked vaguely troubled.

「You said, that you are apologizing to me right?」

And then, she faced Lux again and repeated it once more.

「Eeerr, yes. If it's something that I personally can do then—」

「Then, please teach me.」

「—Eh?」

Lux lifted his face hearing that vague demand.

There, Celis's smile was in front of him.

It wasn't a strict face that overwhelmed others.

It also wasn't an aloof smile that expressed confidence as someone standing above others.

It was her natural smile, that she showed towards 『Luno』.

「I, don't know how to rely on others. I'm also inexperienced on how to behave as a splendid noble. And then—this is the biggest reason, I don't really understand a man's feelings, or how to get along with them too. That's why, please teach me. Just like how your grandfather once taught me. Please, make me rely on you—that's my condition.」

「That means—」

「Yes. Under the name of the Ralgris House, one of the Four Great Nobles, I'll approve your staying in the Academy, and your entrance into my Syvalles. Lux Arcadia.」

「.....Thank you very much. Celis-senpai.」

「And then about that. I'll have you adhere to my first command right away.」

「Eh.....!?」

A command suddenly came to him. It caused Lux's body to stiffen somewhat.

He became slightly anxious about what he was going to get told but—.

「Please keep secret everything that you know about me through being 『Luno』. My dignity will crumble if not.」

Celis seriously said while making a face that looked somewhat troubled.

「Eh, well, yes..... But—I think if I told it to others everyone will think of Celis-senpai as cute, and like you instead though—」

「Wha-.....!?」

Lux nodded while replying like that. Celis was suddenly flustered hearing it.

「Wha, what do you mean? Lux Arcadia. Yo, you said cute just now, who could you be referring—?」

「I, it's hard to answer if I'm asked again like that though, that's, Celis-senpai is.....」

Lux answered hesitantly.

(Bu, but as expected, will I get scolded calling a senior with the word 『cute』?) Lux became somewhat anxious after rethinking like that but,

「Cute.....is it? It's the first time, a man told me that.....」

Her cheeks flared up red and she averted her gaze from Lux.

「A, are you okay!? Celis-senpai!?」

「Wai-, please wait a second! Right now, you must not look at my face! This is an order, Lux Arcadia!」

Seeing Celis getting into a panic and turn her back on him, Lux realized it once more.

As expected, she is really awkward, and cute—he thought.

「We, we are going back now. Then, let's go. To meet the girls, who we should protect—」

「Yes.」

Lux nodded and walked side by side with Celis.

Lux thought that perhaps by some chance, he might be the first man who walked beside Celis.

Part 13

Inside the Academy ground that was enveloped with relieved cheers with the departure of the threat before their eyes.

The headmaster, Relie Aingram was walking on the narrow path that connected from the practice ground to the girl dormitory and school building.

Relie gave out instructions to request reinforcement and gave warning to take shelter in response to the sudden attack before she herself acted. Right now she was searching for a certain girl while avoiding public notice.

No, the truth was that she had been searching all this time while giving out instructions to the staff and instructors and going to look at the Academy's situation.



At that time Relie rushed out from the Academy in order to search for just one certain girl.

「.....」

Relie stepped into the thickets where Drag-Rides were dismantled into pieces.

Sharis and two second year students who fainted were already transported to the medical office.

The men from the mercenary unit whose Wyverns were shot down, were all murdered by the hands of someone.

Most likely, they were cut down by their comrades in order to not leave behind proof.

But, for Relie, such things were nothing but a trivial matter.

「I'm glad.....」

Relie who was making a cornered expression discovered that and she finally let out a sigh of relief.

She found Philuffy leaning on a stone wall while quietly making a sleeper's breathing.

「Let's go home. To our Academy—」

Relie softly reached out her hands, embraced the body, and began walking while lending her shoulder.

On her face, was a smile that was tinged with grief.

「Don't worry, Philuffy.」

Relie abruptly showed the face of a big sister. She caressed Philuffy's soft hair while bringing her cheek closer.

「I won't let you get snatched away, for the second time. Even if—I have to turn the New Kingdom into an enemy.」

That small mutter wasn't heard by anyone's ears.

Epilogue – A New Daily Life, And The Beginning

Part 1

「Fuua.....」

In the middle of afternoon class. Lux was suppressing a bit of a yawn inside the classroom.

It was already three days since that mysterious attack.

Lux who was resting for a while due to exhaustion was finally able to return to class.

Saniya who was a spy from the Heiburg Republic, and the strategist Hayes.

The scars from the attack on the Academy by their forces and the Ragnarok were terrific. Repair work had to be done for some time while the students' training were hastened.

The damage to places like the school building or the girl's dormitory was somewhat low, the injured also mostly ended up with only light injuries. It was a good fortune that could even be called miraculous.

Since then, the New Kingdom was throwing various questions and protests towards the Heiburg Republic, but the government office of the Republic didn't give back any proper reply.

For the time being, the Ragnarok that the Old Empire liberated to outside the country was annihilated, so the big problem that was right before their eyes had gone away, but in the international tournament that would approach in

two more months, it seemed that the Heiburg Republic would also participate, so they still couldn't let their guard down.

(But.....I'm glad. Everyone is safe.)

With this, everyone should be all right for the moment.

Lux who was relieved like that unconsciously dozed off.

「Oi Lux. How long you're going to sleep huh?」

While he was having a pleasant nap, the sensation of his shoulders being shaken repeatedly made him wake up.

When he opened his eyes, Lisha was in front of the desk where he was falling asleep.

「Nn.....? Hah!? I, I'm sorry! The class is—」

「The class is already over from a long time ago. But well, you must be tired, so it should be fine to nap just for today. I was also able to see your cute sleeping face.」

「E, eeh!?!」

When Lisha showed him a teasing smile, Lux wiped his mouth in panic.

It seemed that he wasn't drooling, but when he thought that the girls around him were looking at him all that time, he felt extremely embarrassed.

「You're right. By the way princess. Your sleeping face was also interesting you know? You were sleeping soundly while your body was still sitting straight, and there was also drool dripping—」

「Uwaaah!? Oi Krulcifer! Don't say strange things in front of Lux!」

When Krulcifer said that with her usual cool smile, Lisha who had that fact pointed out yelled with a bright red face.

Lux smiled wryly seeing such a sight while he turned his gaze slowly to the seat beside him.

Philuffy too seemed to be safe without any external injuries particularly visible, but it appeared she had exhaustion piling up inside her body. Today too she was resting.

(After this, I have to visit her.)

As expected, he was exempted from doing chores in these few days, so now that school was over, he would head to the medical room where Philuffy was at. When he stood up from his seat—

「Oi Lux. Where are you going? The whole school assembly is scheduled for today after school you know?」

「Aa.....」

He was stopped by Lisha and Lux recalled about it.

In the campus selection battle this time, the match between Celis and Lux ended up ambiguously, but originally if everything passed without trouble, the comprehensive result was scheduled to be announced after this.

The original meaning of the campus selection battle's objective was to decide the twelve names that would participate in the international tournament.

「Let's go. Though I can already imagine in general who will join the tournament.」

Prompted by Krulcifer, Lux headed together with them towards the practice ground.

Right after that incident, there was the general mobilization of Drag-Knights for maintenance from the surrounding regions and the royal capital. They were asked to repair the Academy as much as possible.

It had only been three days, so it couldn't be said that the practice ground had been repaired, but the rubble had been removed, and its appearance as a practice ground was more or less put in order.

A stage was specially set up at the center of the practice ground, and Instructor Raigree was standing in front of it.

「Now then, the judgment will be decided from the results of the campus selection battle that was carried out the other day, and the representative members for the international tournament will be announced!」

She raised a voice that was well-projected as usual while maintaining her dignified atmosphere.

At that assault incident, she took the initiative to rescue the students, and even after Lux collapsed from exhaustion, it seemed that she was taking command without sleeping for almost two whole days, but she didn't look tired at all as expected from her.

「There are ten representatives, with two substitutes. Of course, the match of the other day in the end is just for reference. The result is decided by taking into account your comprehensive strength, room for growth, ability to cooperate, and so on. Those who aren't chosen are to devote themselves to even more diligent study from here on.」

With that preface, she took a deep breath before finally she read the names.

「Then, I'll announce it. The leader of the selected representatives is, third year student, Celis Ralgris!」

‘Waah!’ At that moment, loud cheers rose from the students.

And then, next the names of the other representatives were read up one after another.

The users of Divine Drag-Rides, Lisha and Philuffy. And then, the trio of Triad who were member of Syvalles, etc, etc. To a certain degree the results were within expectations, but—

「Wait, Krulcifer-san too, you will participate as the New Kingdom's representative!？」

「My? Lux-kun is saying really lonely things isn't it? I thought that you will be happy for me without a doubt—」

Krulcifer responded with her usual smile, which caused Lux to shake his head in a panic, 「Tha, that's not what I mean, Krulcifer-san, you are an overseas student from the Ymir Theocracy aren't you?」

「So far as it goes, there is a quota for overseas students in the regulation of the international tournament, although it's limited to only one name. Well, even so, Ymir is also an allied country of the New Kingdom, though there was a need to ask them for special permission.」

「Tha, that's, don't tell me—?」

Krulcifer showed a mischievous smile to Lux's question,

「Yes, I sent a letter to Alterize, so that Einvolk House requested the country. It seemed that the matter was settled with me being a representative of the Academy where my fiancée is attending.」

「A, is, is that so.....」

(So, somehow it feels like the obstacles are gradually getting removed while I'm in ignorance.) Strange. The betrothal with Krulcifer should be a complete lie, but it seemed that far from just the Einvolk House, even the Ymir Theocracy was recognizing it.

What to do.....

Even while Lux was baffled against the strategy of the intelligent girl, the name reading of the representatives was continuing, and then, 「And last—Lux Arcadia.」

「Eh.....?」

When those words were said out loud, *stir*, the students gathering in that place were stirred.

‘Is it some kind of mistake’—Before Lux could say that, Celis stood on the stage.

Just from that, the noise from the students settled down right away.

「There is something that I have to apologize to everyone.」

Celis surveyed all the students with her usual aloof atmosphere and expression, then she talked.

「I have always hoped for the very best result and moved into action for that sake. Because I believed that it's my duty and it's for the sake of everyone. But—」

Saying that, she cast her eyes down just for a little, before she continued.

「This time, I made a large mistake. I was unable to notice the approach of the Ragnarok, and also unable to see through that the comrade I trusted, was a spy of another country.」

The students were listening with serious expressions at the confession of Celis who was an absolute leader until now.

「I keenly felt, my own immaturity and inadequacies. Perhaps, I'm really not worthy, as someone from the lineage of the Four Great Nobles, or as the captain of Syvalles.」

Celis let out a voice that was faintly tinged with grief, even so she threw out her chest and spoke.

「And so, I want to receive assistance from someone. I want assistance, from non other than all of you. And then, I also wish to ask for assistance, from him who saved me and this Academy.」

After saying only that, Celis straightened her back and showed a calm smile.

「Lux Arcadia. In the match this time, I recognize my defeat, and I will listen to your wish. And then, I will ask for one more thing from my side. Will you lend your strength, for the international tournament in the future?」

The girls, including the third year students, were making shocked expressions towards those words.

Of how Celis who was the 『strongest』 recognized her defeat, and then how she who should be a man-hater recognized Lux, and even asked him for assistance.

The whole student body was shaken from that happening that was too miraculous.

Lux who was asked that question in the middle of the whole assembly where the gazes of the female students were gathering on him—

「—Yes. I too ask you to please take care of me, Celis-senpai.」

He responded like that with a friendly smile.

Lux thought that surely voices of dissatisfaction would come out, but—

‘Waaah’ A loud cheer that shook the whole practice ground welled up right away.

「Hooray! With this we will be together for a while, Lux-senpai!」

「I'm glad. If he is gone, there will be no one that can be asked to do chores anymore.」

「To be recognized by Celis-sama who is a man-hater—.....it's hard to believe but, that's really something.」

Such words flitted around from the mouths of the female students of each respective year.

As expected, it seemed that even the third year students were only supporting Celis. They weren't prejudiced against Lux himself from their true feelings.

The significant declaration that reformed this Academy in a sense was immediately accepted by everyone.

But,

「—Also. Lux promised me that he will teach me various things about males. I'm thinking that I wish to report this to everyone later on, too.」

「.....」

At that time when that happy sounding voice of Celis was heard, *stir-.....!* ripple spread to the surroundings.

And then, the students were starting to whisper in low voices.

「Co, could it be it's, tha, that kind of talk I wonder?」

「Ye, yes..... so they have progressed until that far.」

「A, aa. Her man-hating getting cured, could that mean—!?!」

「Wait! I, I'm telling you all that's mistaken!? Just now, perhaps it isn't mean like that—!?!」

(Fo, for Celis-senpai's tendency to be easily misunderstood to come out at this kind of time-!?) When Lux tried to make justifications to everyone in panic,

「Oi! Lux! What's the meaning of this huh!? Don't tell me, you left me behind, and then did some kind of—obscene things to even Celis!?!」

「I wonder if I can ask you to tell us the details, Lux-kun?」

Even Lisha and Krulcifer were also pressing on him for answers, it became a different commotion from before.

「.....? What is everyone getting noisy for?」

「Haa..... It's fine for you to not know.」

Right near Celis who was tilting her head in confusion, Instructor Raigree sighed and looked up to the far off sky.

—

The highly rising sun was telling the arrival of the early summer.

Part 2

Inside the territory of the New Kingdom Atismata.

In a dark crumbling down old tunnel that had caved in.

In that place that was covered with green moss with no one approaching near, four males and females were there.

A girl in a black robed appearance, and three people standing by beside her.

The military strategist of Heiburg who attacked the Academy, Hayes, and her aides, the three people who were called Cerberus.

「How are you planning to move from here one, Hayes-sama? For the time being, the objective, one of the Grand Forces is safely recovered—」

「Hmph」

Hayes scoffed at Saniya's question while she bit off the jerky she was holding.

「It was unexpected that those bunches could defeat the Ragnarok. They also aren't half bad to be able to defeat that.」

Hayes made a wicked smile with a shadow formed around her eyes.

「But, I should have told enough to the superior of you guys right? The strength of the Ragnarok obeying me, that I called out from Heiburg's Ruins.」

「Yes.....!」

The three people, including Saniya responded like that without delay.

「The general purpose Drag-Rides of you guys that got applied with it, a portion of strength of the Ragnarok obeying me got poured into them, granting them with strengthened physique and super restoration abilities. Well, if you get high spirited too much in using it, their base life force will get wholly devoured, and at the end they will turn into ash though—」

「Yes, it's fortunate that we brought spares. Right after that time, our Drag-Rides that were inserted with 『parasite body』 immediately crumbled down after all—」

「That was certainly shocking.」

A man with bristling red hair, Egnid also nodded.

「Err, Poseidon that was completely on the verge of death was displaying that much strength due to the 『parasite body』 administered into it, so—」

Yes.

The Ragnarok that Lux and the others finished off was unable to even use the special ability it inherently had. It really was in a dying state without any prospect of recovery.

It was there, that the parasite body of the Ragnarok that was liberated from Heiburg's Ruins was planted into it, granting it strength temporarily.

「The strength that was shared with the general purpose Drag-Rides of you guys were only one percent each. For that Poseidon, it was around five percent. And then, my Ragnarok already recovered back the strength that it shared.」

The Ragnarok that administered the parasite body into other inorganic substances, Abyss, animals, and so on. Like that it controlled them, but at the same time it was also granting strength.

The greatest merchandise that Hayes palmed off to the Heiburg Republic as the Black Marketer was that.

「But, that Lux and his comrades are quite troublesome. I never thought that they will—」

Hayes laughed when Saniya raised an anxious voice.

「No worries. Those guys are already holding an outrageous bomb right in their arms.」

「Bomb?」

Hayes turned her back on Saniya and raised her voice.

「To think that my past experiment result is surviving in that kind of place. The

flesh and blood human who has thirteen percent of the strength of the Ragnarok's parasite body implanted inside—a supreme masterpiece monsterdevil possessed!」

Hayes shrill laughter echoed inside the collapsed cylindrical shaped wall.

—

The demonic loud laughter could be heard indefinitely in that place.

Afterword

Long time no see.

This is Akatsuki Senri who was fainting in agony from double punch of influenza and hay fever in the middle of writing this third volume.

Every year I'm taking precaution using things like mask, so it has been a few years since the last time I got hit with it fully, but the damage is staggering with how long it has been. Health is really important huuh. I'm feeling that once more.

Also, the snow this year is amazing.

The place where I'm living doesn't really have snow fall. In the past I was really happy piling up snow. In high school, I thought of pretentious things like 『It'd be nice if there is elegance from snow huuh』, but it's that. When I've grown old, I can only think of it as 『troublesome』, it's a sad thing.

Or rather, because of the snow's fault, various things happened to mail order, or documents from the editorial department-sama.....

Even so, I like snow though.

—

Now then, I have a bit of news.

This work, 『Saijaku Muhai no Shinsou Kiryuu』 will get a manga version! Thank you very much.

The detail is scheduled to be announced before long, so look forward to it.

—

And so, I'm thinking to begin my thanks.

The illustrator Kasuga Ayumu-sama. Thank you very much for the illustrations

of amazing quality while being very busy this time too.

When I first saw the colored illustration of Lisha and Krulcifer, 『I didn't think that they are this undressed!』 shock ran through me. And then I became worried if it will pass through the checking of editing-sama (lol).

My editor Saitou-sama. Thank you very much for your help this time in aspects other than the manuscript, like the setting up of 『Bahamut』's homepage, and things like the design of Drag-Ride's stats explanation. Please take care of me from here on too.

—

Well then, please allow me to say goodbye with this much at this time.

Next volume will finally be the story of Lux and Philuffy.

A certain day in February 2014 Akatsuki Senri

References

1. ↑ I assume you already know what this means. For those who don't, it's simply a retort of the sort.
2. ↑ The reason why he looked puzzled was because he was told that she didn't look good and that her muscles hurt.
3. ↑ He first use *boku* (I) only use by males before changing to *watashi* (I) used by both genders.
4. ↑ Meaning that she leaves someone to decide for her instead, something along those lines.
5. ↑ Contest between Lux faction and Celis faction. She means here that if they defeat Celis, the other students will be no match for them afterwards.
6. ↑ Raisen (らいせん)
7. ↑ Quarrel about Lux, that is.